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Abstract

Material Belief: A Critical History of Archaeological Approaches to Religious Change in Anglo-Saxon England

Sira Maddalena Dooley Fairchild

This thesis aims to explore the long-term historical background for the archaeological study of the Anglo-Saxon conversion to Christianity in seventh century England. Following the recent work that has been done on the context and motivations of the migration debate within Anglo-Saxon archaeology (Lucy 2002, Hills 2003) this project has looked at the ways in which contemporary socio-cultural, religious and political factors have shaped the study of early medieval religion in Britain. Beginning with the early modern period, this study traces the history of the material of conversion through subsequent generations of scholars, exposing the historical and religious motivations behind each new interpretation. A careful critical reading of the published texts was performed, covering both antiquarian and archaeological interpretations of the subject. It was found that the study of the conversion and the wider topic of early medieval religion, both before and after the coming of Christianity, has been very much contingent on the historical context in which it has been undertaken. Several common threads have been identified throughout the period, including a consistent focus on the graves and grave-goods as the best way of accessing religious information about individuals and a frequent tendency toward the unquestioning acceptance of the historical truth of the written sources. Following the recent suggestion by Ronald Hutton (2010) that we will likely never fully understand the Anglo-Saxon conversion, this thesis explores the many attempts that have been made to explain the conversion and its implications. This in-depth study of the past of the subject calls into question not only received ideas about the Conversion passed down through generations of scholars, but also the theoretical and methodological lenses through which it is studied today.

**Material Belief:
A Critical History of Archaeological Approaches
to Religious Change in Anglo-Saxon England**

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Archaeology
Durham University
2012

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Acknowledgements

This thesis owes its final form to the support of my supervisors, Dr Marga Diaz-Andreu and especially Dr Sarah Semple, whose good humour and patience are only surpassed by her knowledge. Along the way, guidance and levity have been provided by many other members of the Durham staff, especially Dr Derek Craig, Dr Tom Moore, Dr Claire Nesbitt, Dr Pam Graves and many others too numerous to mention.

For laughter, commiserations, gin-and-tonics and coffees also too numerous to mention, Angela Perri, Akira Nishitani, Rich Hartis, Heba Abd-el-Gawad, Arthur Anderson, James Taylor, Brian Buchanan, James Walker, Jen Tremblay, Dan Lawrence, Clare Wills, Gwen Bergius, Lisa Brundle, Joy Eddy, Jocelyn Baker, Tom Fitton, Jen Peacock, Chris Davis, Rosie Bishop, Kristen Hopper, Tudor Skinner and the rest of the postgrad community all share both the credit and the blame. Thanks dudes.

For providing support wherever and whenever needed, thanks go to Sarah Boucker, Emma Johnstone, Rebecca Clark, Aimee Murray, Jamie Pittel, Alice Whitmore, Patrick Kiley, Jude Kiley-Morgan, Marcelo Segura, Caitlin Pearson, Mark Fletcher, and Steve Richardson.

For their unending support, many thanks are also due to my parents, Norah Dooley and Robert Fairchild; my three younger sisters, Julia, Ferron and Rosalie; and all three of my aunts: Phyllis, Eileen and especially Cathy, for her quick and careful proof-reading of the first three chapters. All remaining errors are my own.

This thesis is dedicated to the family and friends who have passed away during the writing of it: Wolf Jules, Barbara and Hank Allen and my grandmother, Adelaide Dooley.

So Augustine, strengthened by the encouragement of St. Gregory, in company with the servants of Christ, returned to the work of preaching the word, and came to Britain Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 1, Chapter 25 (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 73)

Introduction

This thesis explores the ways in which antiquarians and archaeologists have addressed the material survivals that provide evidence for the conversion of the English to Christianity in the post-Roman period. The well known, but rare and fragmentary, documentary sources from this period attest to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon population beginning around AD 597. The studies being undertaken today, within early medieval archaeology and related subject areas, are the most recent products of an ongoing process of research that had its origin with Bede in the early eighth century. From early medieval authors such as Geoffrey of Monmouth and William of Malmesbury, to the eighteenth- and nineteenth- century antiquarians, to Brian Hope-Taylor (1977) and Henry Mayr-Harting (1972) in the twentieth century and up to the current day; studies of the Conversion reveal much about the social, political and religious milieu in which their authors lived and worked. This thesis, by means of cross-period research and critical appraisal of published accounts, will thus expose the varied and changing lenses through which the Conversion of the English to Christianity has been viewed by archaeologists over time in order to expose the developing trajectory of this crucial field of research and to examine the long-term influence of scholarship on current thought.

Aims and Objectives

The central aim of this thesis is to undertake an historiographical analysis of the body of archaeological studies and scholarly accounts of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion. Scholars of the Conversion have left nearly 1300 years of source material from which we can glean information about how they perceived their subject and how they rooted their interpretations within and took inspiration from, their social, political and religious discourses. This thesis takes as its subject the studies that have focused on the material culture of the Conversion, from the sixteenth century to the present day. A large body of published scholarly literature has been collated and analyzed here in order to describe

and define the interpretations put forth by successive generations of scholars and critically appraise how modern perceptions of the Conversion in archaeology have been shaped.

Three objectives or themes are addressed in this thesis. The first is the complex relationships between the scholarship dealing with the Conversion and the social and political contexts in which they were created. Through analyzing this, the thesis explores the variety of answers that antiquarians and archaeologists have provided for the question “why convert?” and how those answers were shaped and influenced by the religious and cultural backgrounds of the individuals who asked this question. Secondly, the thesis interrogates the relationship between text and material culture in the study of the Conversion: exploring how text can influence, distort and lead studies of the material culture. Thirdly, an assessment is made of the role of past scholarship on the subject in the creation of new work (i.e. how have past scholars and studies influenced the on-going development of the subject). Together, these three objectives facilitate an assessment of the nature of archaeological research on the subject of the Conversion across the last 500 years.

The following paragraphs expand on the three key objectives included in this thesis, beginning with the first and, arguably, most crucial aspect of this study. Understanding the social and political environments in which studies of the Conversion were created is of paramount importance. Archaeology does not take place in a vacuum; it reacts with its cultural context in a reciprocal relationship. This is not unique to Anglo-Saxon archaeology, but rather a fact of all archaeological scholarship (Shanks and Tilley 1992: 62-3). In this study, the Anglo-Saxon Conversion is a topic that can be seen not only to be influenced by wider religious and political questions, but also one that has been key in framing social and political debate in Britain. This important theme runs through the history of Conversion studies from Bede to the present day. This thesis must also be seen as a reflection of its own time and place. The influence of the social environment can be seen in the answers produced by antiquarians and archaeologists to the question “Why did the Anglo-Saxons convert to Christianity?” Not all scholars of the Conversion have addressed this issue directly, but it lies at the heart of studies of the topic. Where this question is not addressed, it can be interesting to explore the reasons behind such absences, and to consider the lack of interest as perhaps more telling than its presence.

The second important theme for this thesis is the central relationship between text and material evidence in the study of the Conversion. Although the Conversion period lies on

the cusp of the period considered “historical archaeology”, textual sources have always been of paramount importance to the study of the conversion event. The strength of the relationship between text and material culture in the context of Anglo-Saxon archaeology has been variable (Carver 1999; Driscoll and Nieke 1988); yet this relationship can be shown to have been pivotal in the development of thought. The entirety of historical archaeology has the issue of text to contend with, and the archaeology of the Conversion is no exception. This thesis reveals that the textual evidence for the Conversion has defined both the questions posed by archaeologists *and* the range of answers tendered.

The final objective is to establish the influence of past research and past portrayals in the developing study of the Conversion. This thesis traces lines of influence passed down through generations of scholars and explores the impact of a body of scholarship on successive generations of work. Past scholarship is particularly pertinent because the body of historical and archaeological knowledge on the subject of Conversion dates back almost to the Conversion itself and there has never been a study of the Conversion which was not aided or burdened by the subject’s past. This is not to assert that this study takes a linear view of progress in the field of Anglo-Saxon studies. As Frantzen has shown, “the history of Anglo-Saxon studies is conventionally understood as a march from amateurism to professionalism within the paradigm of primitivism and progress” (Frantzen 1990: 21); this study, like Frantzen’s, rejects that idea. The history of the archaeology of the Conversion should be understood not as a slow progression towards an understanding of the platonic essence of the past, but rather the history of an emotive topic that has been picked up and used to suit the needs of successive generations of scholars. It is a chronological, but not progressive, study of the subject.

These objectives, or lines of exploration, come together to provide a comprehensive picture of the societal, academic and developmental context in which the archaeology of the Conversion was formed. This thesis offers a unique perspective on the development of this topic, and one which, to date, has not been fully explored. By creating a contextualized, critical appraisal of how archaeological approaches to the Conversion developed, this thesis demonstrates that even in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, modern scholarship remains in thrall to both the ancient texts and the ideas put forth by past generations of scholars.

Research Context

While there have been a small collection of papers which address the histories of certain aspects of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, there has been a dearth of large-scale studies on the development of the topic. Past work on the history of Anglo-Saxon archaeology often focuses on the career of a single individual (e.g. Williams 2008) or, less frequently, on the history of a site or artefact (e.g. Moreland 1999). In the field of popular history (or ‘popular historiography’, perhaps), Paul Hill’s *The Anglo-Saxons: The Verdict of History* provides a chronological overview of studies of Anglo-Saxon history (P. Hill 2006), using a similar time scale to this thesis. Also, Catherine Hills’ *Origins of the English* explores some of the historical representations of the Anglo-Saxon period generally (Hills 2003). Little work has been done on the historiography of the conversion, with the exception of David Petts’ recent book, *Pagan and Christian: Religious Change in Early Medieval Europe* (Petts 2011), which explores the subject for Europe generally, but with specific reference to the British material. The body of literature that pertains to this subject is interrogated fully in Chapter One and it is clear from a comprehensive analysis that the history of archaeological studies of the Conversion has not been adequately understood.

Some aspects of Anglo-Saxon archaeology have received attention in recent years, successfully challenging the theory and practice of the archaeology of this period. For example, Sam Lucy and Catherine Hills have called into question long-held ideas about Anglo-Saxon migration and attempted to place them in historical context (Hills 2003; Lucy 2002). Together these works revolutionized the way that the migration was considered and used in archaeological studies, as well as calling into question past interpretations of sites and artefacts. Outside of archaeology, scholars from various disciplines have shown that the notion of Anglo-Saxon identity as both an historical and contemporary concept has been used both politically and socially since the early modern period (Frantzen 1990; Frantzen and Niles 1997; Horsman 1981; MacDougall 1982).

What makes this study unique is the emphasis on the religious aspects of the cultural context and scholarly response to the material. This addresses a previously ignored perspective and aims to inform future scholarship on the subject. The value of historiographical studies to archaeology is manifold, but they are most useful when they allow us to understand something about the ideas we use in our own research and where they come from. The nature of academic practice leads us to reconsider, reuse and sometimes challenge the body of previous work. The production of literature reviews and bibliographies as a standard part of academic practice means that while individual

scholars can either engage positively or negatively with the canon of academic literature on a subject, there is no way to avoid engaging with the ideas of past scholarship. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to establish the conditions under which those studies were produced and the ways in which they ultimately influence our current understandings.

The field of the History of Archaeology, although increasingly popular, remains a field without a recognized, unified methodology. There are nearly as many ways of researching the History of Archaeology as there are studies of the subject (T. Murray and Evans 2008: 3-4). The various methodologies that have been used in the past are fully explored in Chapter One as part of the literature review. Perhaps most closely related to the burgeoning discipline of the History and Philosophy of Science; Historians of Archaeology borrow methodology from that discipline, but also from history, anthropology and philosophy. Past studies of the History of Archaeology have often been either very broad, covering entire centuries of development (Díaz-Andreu 2007; Trigger 2006 for example), or else very narrowly constrained to the biography of a single individual (Fagan 2001; Sebire 2007). This study avoids both extremes and instead focuses on the history of a single aspect over the *longue durée*, constrained in terms of subject but covering a long period of time. It is hoped that this approach will provide time-depth and dimension for the history of this fascinating aspect of British archaeology.

Theoretical Background

Given that there is no unified theory or methodology for the history of archaeology, this thesis employs a theoretical background drawn from a number of sources and disciplines. Most importantly, the method used in this project is formalist, following Hayden White's *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (H. V. White 1973). In this seminal historiographical text, White described his method thus:

I will consider the historical work as what it most manifestly is – that is to say, a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of *explaining what they were by representing them*. My method, in short, is formalist. I will not try to decide whether a given historian's work is a better, or more correct, account of a specific events or segment of the historical process than some other historian's account of them, rather, I will seek to identify the structural components of those accounts (H. V. White 1973: 2-4 italics in the original).

White described the act of writing history as a process of constructing a narrative framework which the human mind requires to process historical information, not dissimilar to the act of writing fiction (H. V. White 1973: 6-7). He identified a universal human need for narrative which results in our requiring historical stories which assign relative importance to events, show causal relationships and provide us with a clear beginning, middle and end (H. V. White 1973). Without these narratives, we cannot begin to make sense of bare historical facts. The Conversion occurred; we know this because before a certain point all Anglo-Saxons were pagan and after that point they were Christian. This is an historical fact that cannot be argued with. But, as with all of history, it is not a fact that is comprehensible without the aid of narratives, such as those provided by Bede and others in the early textual sources and later interpretations by antiquarians and archaeologists. In the context of this study, this method allows for an approach that does not attempt to adjudicate between the various historical interpretations of the Conversion but rather seeks to understand how the various narrative representations of this historical event have been created, what influenced them and how they are used in their contemporary contexts.

This study does not simply focus on these narrative representations, but also addresses the contexts in which they were created and how these academic contributions were influenced by these milieux. Context is a problematic concept because it can be difficult to draw a line between which contemporary events impact on the scholarly work being done at the time. This question has been recently addressed (although not solved) by Peter Galison, who asks, “What kind of thing is a candidate for context? Further: Is a contextual explanation as strong as a causal account...?” (Galison 2008: 113). For the purposes of this thesis, scholarly interpretations of the Conversion are studied both as being affected by and affecting the socio-political climate in which they were produced, but it is important to be very careful when deciding which aspects of the historical environment can be said to have influenced these representations. On a related point, Diaz-Andreu has argued that the context in which a scholar works is not determinative; rather it simply makes individuals aware of certain themes to investigate in their work (Díaz-Andreu 2007: 399). In other words, the social, political or religious climate suggests, but does not dictate, the themes that are taken up by scholars.

The choice to study this topic over such a long time scale is deliberate, in order to facilitate the identification of the long-term implications of the patterns of inquiry that can be seen within this discipline. This follows the theory of the historical process set forth by the *Annales* School of French historical practice and specifically its

conceptualization of history on a very long scale. First popularized by the historians Marc Bloch and Lucian Febvre in the early twentieth century (Bloch 1953), and expanded by Fernand Braudel in the 1960s (Braudel 1980), the *Annalists* contrasted the history of events, or *l'histoire événementielle* to the history of the *longue durée*. In this case, use of the *longue durée* allows the specific works of individual scholars to be seen as constituent parts of a long-lasting whole. This is not to discount the importance of individual action, but rather a recognition of the larger temporal impact of the concept of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion. This can be contrasted with the micro-historical and biographical strands familiar within the History of Archaeology (Givens 1992b; P. J. Smith 2009) which focus narrowly on the events of the lives of individuals or their excavations.

The History of Archaeology has been successfully considered over the *longue durée* by Alain Schnapp, in *The Discovery of the Past*, in which he argued that the collection of material from the past is an inherent part of being human (Schnapp 1993: 11-12). In this exploration of the global past of archaeology, Schnapp records the long-term development of archaeology as human activity from the very earliest hunter/gatherer societies to the beginnings of a formalized discipline in the nineteenth century. Although this study covers a much smaller topic and only partially overlaps in time and space with Schnapp's account, it is methodologically similar in the sense that it explores the complete development of an idea from its beginning to the present day.

In this thesis, the canonical text-based narrative taken from Bede can be seen as a hegemonic narrative, which not only defines the standardized norm of Conversion studies, but also, by virtue of its canonical position, defines and controls what is possible outside of the established narrative. These are the theoretical perspectives which underpin this thesis. They are rooted in several disciplines, but taken together, they form a theoretical framework for this study that facilitates an exploration of the archaeological narratives of Conversion constructed over the *longue durée*, and finally how this hegemonic and canonical culture impacts on the study of the topic even to the present day.

Parameters of the Study

This study focuses on the Conversion not simply because it provides a window into the larger field of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, but also because the culturally-laden, and often contentious topic of religion has the potential to provide insight into the workings of societies that less controversial topics might not allow. Delimiting the thesis to this

single strand also allows a longer time period in which to address changing concepts. At the broadest level, the history of archaeology as a discipline provides the widest context for this study, offering the scholarly context within which Conversion studies originated and were pursued. Within this, the history of Anglo-Saxon archaeology and Anglo-Saxon studies provides a framework for the thesis. The archaeology and history of Anglo-Saxon religion provides a closer backdrop for the study, including the rich array of evidence for the use and misuse of Anglo-Saxon religion - pagan and Christian - in the political and religious controversies of the past. Finally, the history of the Conversion itself, resting within these nested contexts, offers an extraordinary new insight into how studies of the English Conversion and its material culture have been conceptualized from the sixteenth century to today.

The structure adopted here is shaped by chronology. It begins with the medieval textual sources, and traces the history of their reception through the current day. The chronological division of the chapters was achieved by means of the research conducted in this thesis. As a consequence, it does not use the established chronologies commonly adopted in the history of archaeology. Chronologies which divide the past into neat, century-long periods (such as Sweet 2004 for the eighteenth century) are not appropriate for this study and the use of conventional historical periods would have obscured some of the important changes that occurred within archaeology that did not map onto larger cultural changes. For example, this thesis divides the Victorian period into two chapters rather than maintaining either the convention of studying the nineteenth century as a whole, or using the years of Queen Victoria's reign to delimit the chapter. The changing conceptions of Conversion naturally fall into several clear time periods. These are defined by changes in the methodology being used or in the types of evidence being considered. The chronological divisions are thus driven not only moments in the history of this subject when a clear change has come about in the method or context of the study, but by changing approaches to the collection and interpretation of the material culture itself.

Chapter One offers a review of the relevant literature. It critically reviews the variety of scales and methods used to produce different types of studies, as well as providing an overview of the scholarship on Anglo-Saxonism. Chapter Two contains an exploration of the medieval textual sources on the subject of conversion. Understanding the creation and biography of the medieval textual sources is essential to establish the foundation on which all further studies have been built. The period between 1500 and 1750 is explored in Chapter Three, an era during which the historical study of the Conversion rose to prominence, inspired by the political and religious turmoil of the English Reformation.

This chapter explores the ways in which the Conversion was understood prior to the recognition that material culture could contribute to historical understandings of the period. Chapter Four addresses the era from 1750 to the beginning of the Victorian age in the 1830s, capturing the transition to studies that included archaeological remains alongside the textual sources and revealing the strong influence of the Romantics on the study of the English national past. The following chapter addresses the Victorian mania for the Anglo-Saxon past, well-explored in general terms, but never before studied from the specific perspective of the archaeology of religion. This chapter places the study of the Conversion in the context of the culture of nineteenth-century Britain, and shows how the contemporary concerns surrounding the religious and political life of Britain were played out in the scholarship of the antiquarians and archaeologists of the time. Chapter Six addresses the period from 1880 to 1950, a time when the World Wars altered the traditional narratives of Teutonic origins. This chapter lays out the scene as it stood at the origin of a recognizable modern medieval archaeology in the middle of the twentieth century. Chapter Seven utilizes two key case studies from the past 60 years in order to illuminate contemporary developments in the field since the end of the Second World War. This is followed by a brief concluding section.

Geographically, this study is limited to the English Conversion and does not extend to studies of the same issue in the rest of the British Isles or on the Continent. Reference to comparative narratives from these regions has been included only where there is a clear relationship between it and the work undertaken on the English material. Although the majority of the work undertaken has been achieved within the confines of this country, the material used was not limited to research produced in Britain or by British authors. The English conversion is a topic that has most often been studied in isolation from its wider context. This is particularly true of the early antiquarian material, but is less apparent after the end of the Victorian period. Today we recognize it as part of the larger conversion process of the post-Roman world, but in the past much has been made of the unique nature of the English experience and the perceived differences between it and the same processes in Scotland, Wales and Ireland, as well as within the wider European context. This is not the place to take up the appropriateness of this distinction, but it is important to acknowledge that the historical pattern of thinking about the Anglo-Saxon conversion has been highly insular. As a consequence, the material studied below describes a particularly English response to an intrinsically English question; this is an insular study because its subjects were frequently insular in their worldview.

In keeping with the objective of exploring the use and reuse of past interpretations and approaches, the data set for this thesis includes the published literature, but does not encompass the archival or unpublished materials except where these elucidate some area of contextual importance. This approach was chosen deliberately and reflects the difference between the public, accessible canon of published material on the one hand and the archival material on the other. The latter is potentially important but did not influence subsequent studies in the same way as the published material. This is not a dismissal of the importance of the archives of letters and private papers of antiquarians and archaeologists, which have been used successfully by many historians of archaeology in the past, but rather represents a methodological choice – aimed at achieving a focus directly on the material which was read, circulated, used and passed down by subsequent generations. The focus of this study is on the presentation and representation of the Anglo-Saxon religious past to the wider academic world.

Methods and Sources

The material for this thesis was collected and collated through the careful reading of the texts on the subject of the Conversion that were available to the scholarly classes throughout the period of 1500 to the present day. Primary sources for this study include published books and articles written by antiquarians and archaeologists concerning the Conversion, and secondary sources include historiographical literature, historical studies and the literature reviews of later archaeologists. Locating and collecting material was accomplished by utilizing the databases and citation indexes available online and making use of the catalogues of the Durham University Library, the Cambridge University Library, the British Library and the Harvard University Library, and exploiting the bibliographies included in relevant primary and secondary sources. Some of the key primary sources were accessed via digital repositories such as *Early English Books Online*. Together these collections represent a wide range of primary and secondary texts on every subject, as both the British Library and Cambridge University Library are legal copyright depositories. In those rare cases where journals have not yet been fully digitally indexed, as was the case for the first run of *Archaeologia*, the volumes were examined individually in order to ascertain the presence or absence of material related to Anglo-Saxon Conversion. In order to contextualize the development of this subject, a wide variety of secondary literature was consulted, with the heaviest focus lying on historiographical studies of the development of archaeology.

The unique nature of this thesis lies not in the production of new data, but rather in the way that it brings together extant and in some cases well-known material and analyses it, not as disparate pieces, but rather as a continuous narrative situated around a key and crucial theme. Many of the primary sources cited in this thesis have been previously identified as important and interesting contributions by scholars researching the historiographical context of this period. The body of secondary historiographical material is reviewed in Chapter 1 and many of the seminal publications are explored in that chapter. Subsequently, throughout this thesis, key primary published sources that have seen previous comment in the published literature on the history of archaeology are signposted through mention and citation of secondary analyses where appropriate.

The number of primary sources identified and analyzed in this thesis can be seen to increase in number over time (see figure 1 below). This pattern reflects the general growth in academic publication across the centuries and the burgeoning interest on the part of antiquarians and later archaeologists in the Anglo-Saxon past. Figure 1 shows the sources used in this thesis divided by 25-year periods, for the years 1500 to 1950. Sources published after 1950 are not included here as there has been a massive increase in academic publications both in print and online since that year and as a consequence the relevant literature from this period has been dealt with using a more selective approach (see Chapter Seven).

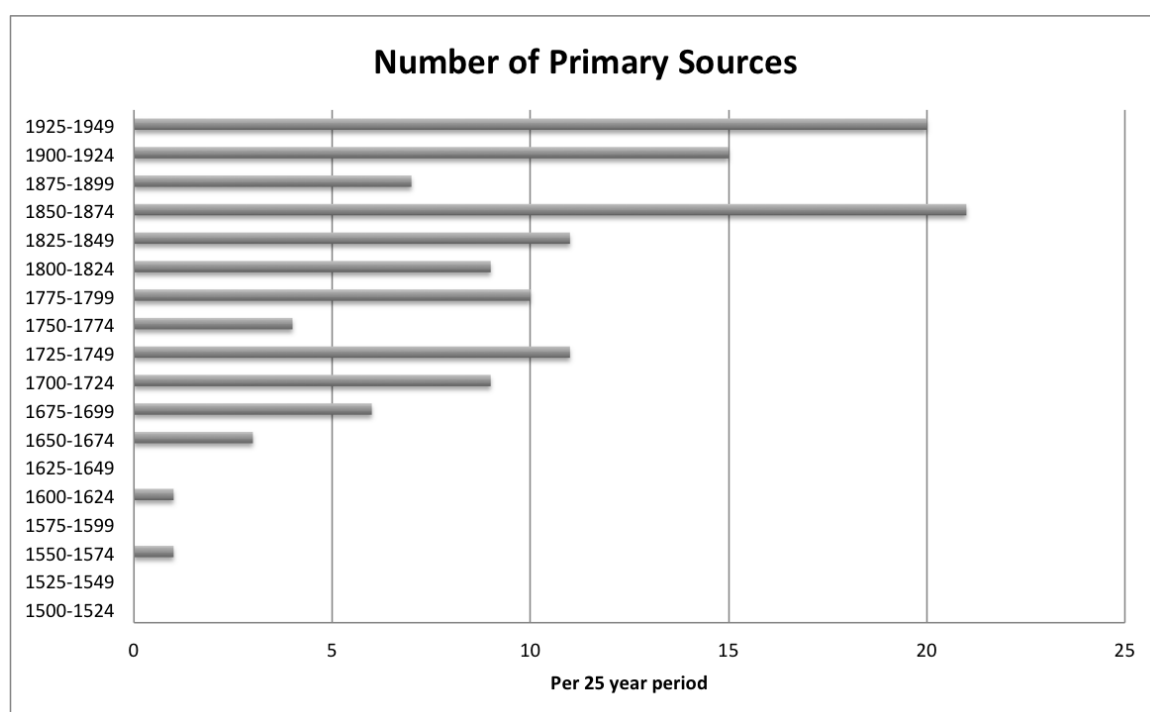


Figure 1: Number of primary sources per 25-year period

The body of literature identified as relevant to the questions posed in this thesis changes across time as a result of the evolving nature of scholarship, methodological approaches, and the emergence and development of a thriving publishing industry. The first published accounts identified as core data for this thesis are the historical, chorographical and philological monographs dating to the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Historical scholarship during this period tended to be exceptionally wide ranging and the Anglo-Saxon period was often included only as a small part of a larger text. For example, these include texts such as Robert Brady's 1685 text entitled *A Complete History of England, from the First Entrance of the Romans under the Conduct of Julius Caesar, unto the End of the Reign of King Henry III* (Brady 1685) and Edward Stillingfleet's *Origines Britannicae*, published the same year (Stillingfleet 1685). Since monographs from this era did not yet conventionally contain bibliographies and their authors almost never cited their sources, access to this material was gained primarily through secondary literature on the early development of Anglo-Saxonism and the library catalogues enumerated above. The collection of rare books held in the Durham University library was invaluable to this research as it encompasses more than 70,000 books printed prior to 1850. Monographs have provided a key category of evidence throughout the five centuries considered in this thesis, offering not only a direct reference to the material remains of the Anglo-Saxon age but also providing context – references to Anglo-Saxon material or texts occurs invariably within a wider contextual discussion that has proved essential to this study.

Key national journals have also formed a very large part of the material collected and analyzed in this thesis. By the late eighteenth century, established and regular journal publications were in circulation, often with the explicit aim of allowing their geographically disparate membership a mode of communication. For example, *Archaeologia* was initiated in 1770, and the first volumes were filled with a hand-picked selection of topics drawn from the minutes of the previous decades of the Society of Antiquaries meetings. These were chosen by Richard Gough, director of the Society, to represent a wide range of possible interests (Pearce 2007a: 151).

Archaeologia	1770-
Antiquaries Journal	1921-
Antiquity	1927-
Journal of the British Archaeological Association	1845-
Medieval Archaeology	1957-
Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society	1665/1666-
Proceedings of the British Academy	1905-

Table 1: Key journals used in the production of this thesis

The journals listed above were not focused specifically on the Anglo-Saxon period, but they did include papers and notes by authors who were interested in researching this period of history. Inevitably the frequency with which Anglo-Saxon material remains were discussed in these journals varied from issue to issue and indeed from decade to decade. Anglo-Saxonism can be seen to rise and diminish in popularity and papers pertinent to this study – those dealing directly with paganism, Christianity and the Conversion – featured even less frequently than contributions on the broader study of the Anglo-Saxon past. Table 2 below provides an example of these fluctuations.

Vol. I ¹ 1770	William Stukeley (1755) <i>The Sanctuary at Westminster</i> 39-44, James Theobald (1755) <i>Some Account of Saint Peter's Church in the East, Oxon</i> 151-155, Samuel Pegge (1752) <i>A Dissertation on an Antient Jewel of the Anglo-Saxons</i> 161-167, John Watson (1766) <i>A Mistaken Passage in Bede's Ecclesiastical History Explained</i> 221-226
Vol. II 1772	Samuel Pegge (1765) <i>Observations on the Mistakes of Mr Lisle and Mr Hearne</i> 68-74, Dr Milles (1765) <i>Observations on the Aestel</i> 75-79, Samuel Pegge (1766) <i>Observations on Dr Percy's Account of Minstrels Among the Saxons</i> 100-106, Mr Colebrooke (1766) <i>An Account of the Monument Commonly Ascribed to Catigern</i> 107-117, Dr Milles (1768) <i>Observations on an Inscription in the Church of Sunninghill, Berks.</i> 129-130
Vol. III 1775	Gov Parnall (1771) <i>On the Boundary Stone of Croyland Abbey</i> 96-104, Mr Mander (1768) <i>Discoveries in a Barrow in Derbyshire</i> 274-275, Samuel Pegge (1774) <i>Observations on Two Jewels in the Possession of Sir Charles Mordaunt</i> 371-375
Vol. IV 1777	Samuel Pegge (1773) <i>Illustration of a Gold Enameled Ring</i> 47-68, Gustavus Brander (1775) <i>Account of a Singular Discovery of a Quantity of Bird Bones Buried in Christ Church Priory, Hampshire</i> 117-118*, Samuel Pegge (1776) <i>Mr Pegge's Remarks on the Bones of Fowls Found in Christ-Church-Twynham, Hampshire</i> 414-420*
Vol. V 1779	John Watson (1776) <i>An Account of Some Hitherto Undescribed Remains of Antiquity</i> 87-94, John-Charles Brooke (1777) <i>An Illustration of a Saxon Inscription on the Church of Kirkdale in Rydale</i> 188-205*, Samuel Pegge (1777) <i>Observations on the Stone Coffins Found at Christchurch</i> 224-229, Samuel Pegge (1778) <i>An Important Historical Passage of Gildas Amended and Explained</i> 272-279

Table 2: Anglo-Saxon contributions to *Archaeologia* 1770-1779

In the first decade of its publication *Archaeologia* published a total of 19 papers on Anglo-Saxon subjects. Of these, only three refer to the Conversion of the English people and thus feature in the analysis and discussions in Chapter 4. From a total of 217 articles, the 19 articles on Anglo-Saxon subjects represent some 9% of the total published output.

¹ For the first several decades of its publication, *Archaeologia* drew upon papers presented to the Society in prior years, beginning as far back as 1727 (Pearce 2007: 151). The volumes listed above were published between 1770 and 1779, but contain papers presented in the meetings of the Society of Antiquaries in the 50 years prior to its first publication, so the date cited here for the individual papers is that of their publication, not the original presentation to the assembles members.

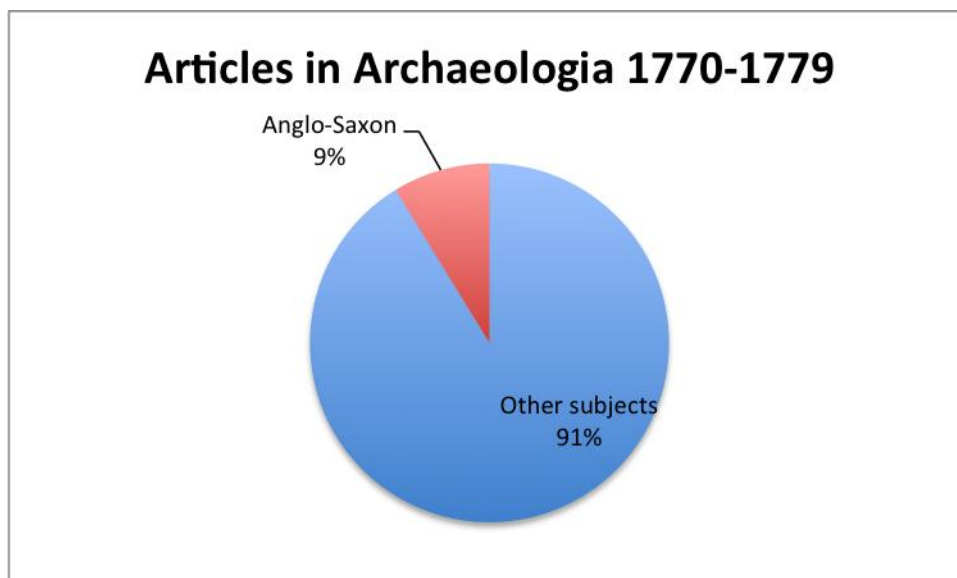


Figure 2: Articles found in Archaeologia in the period between 1770 and 1779

The long continuous publication of *Archaeologia* provided an opportunity to see temporal changes in the popularity of Anglo-Saxon topics. Figure 3 below shows the changing percentage of articles on the subject of Anglo-Saxon archaeology in relation to the total amount of published material, comparing the 1770's, 1870's and 1970's.

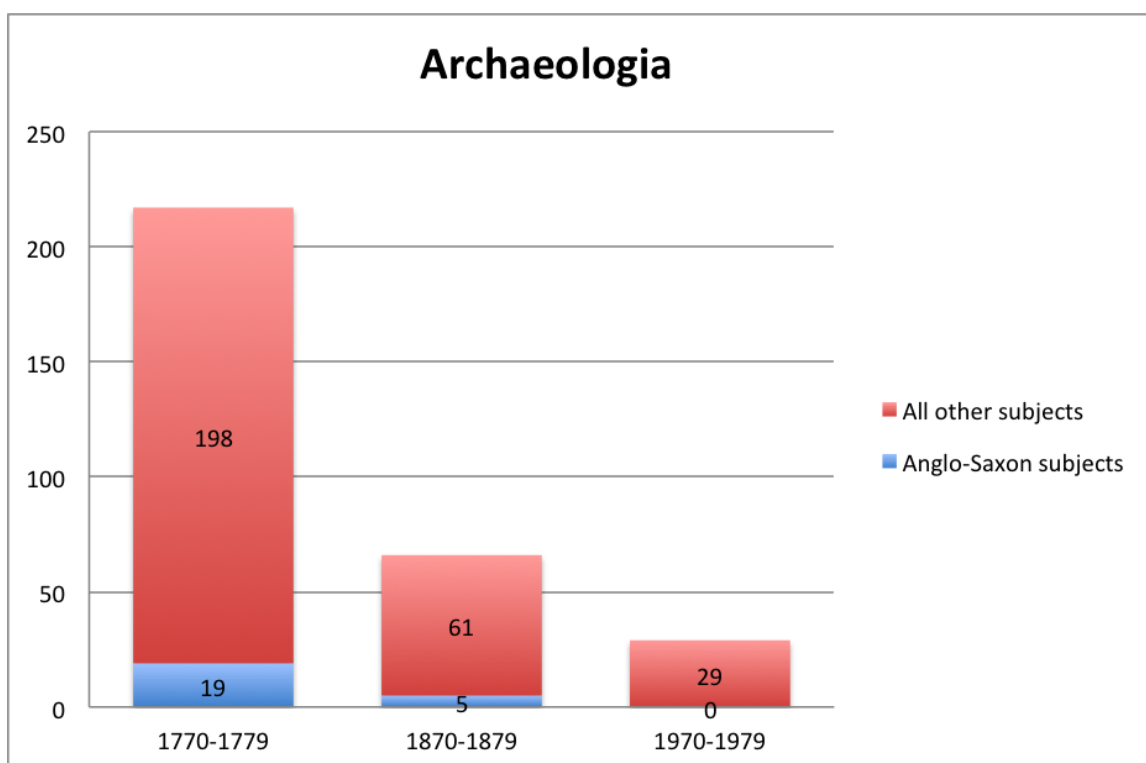


Figure 3: Comparison between articles in Archaeologia in 1770-1779, 1870-1879 and 1970-1979

Over time, this journal has published fewer, longer articles, and the number of Anglo-Saxon entries fell steadily. From 9% in the 1770's, it dropped to 8% in the 1860's, and interestingly to 0% in the 1970's. Of course, this is only one example. It demonstrates,

however, how these long-running journals were used and interrogated as primary sources for this thesis and underlines just how limited at times the body of literature on Anglo-Saxon topics has been, and, conversely, its popularity at other times. Thorough analysis of these major long-running journal series have provided a thermometer for changing interests – revealing the popularity of topics in certain eras and facilitating a more close grained study of the actual debates on Conversion period archaeology and the way in which arguments and approaches have changed over time. Whilst it is impossible to state with any certainty, it is probable that the lack of articles on Anglo-Saxon topics in *Archaeologia* in the 1970's could in part be a result of the introduction of several journals devoted specifically to medieval subjects that appeared in the latter half of the twentieth century, including the introduction of *Medieval Archaeology* in 1957. Opportunities to publish for a more specialized audience may have drawn material away from more generalized journals like *Archaeologia*.

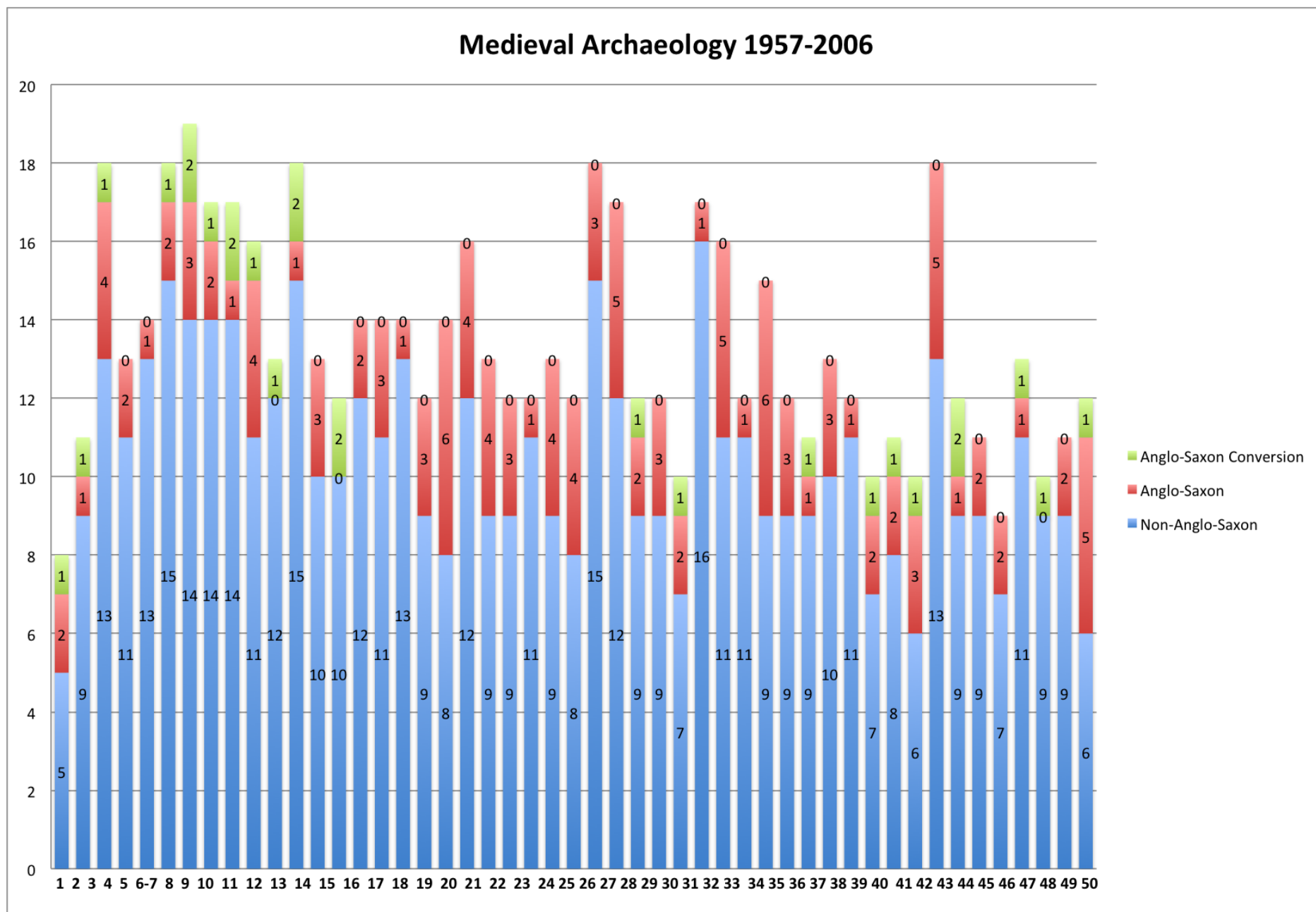


Figure 4: Number of articles published in the journal *Medieval Archaeology* between 1957 and 2006

Figure 4 above shows the number of articles that were published in the first 50 issues of *Medieval Archaeology*, from 1957 to 2006. Volumes 6 and 7 were bound together and have been treated as one volume here. It is clear that, whilst papers on Anglo-Saxon topics made up a relatively stable portion of the journal's output, there were periods, especially in the 1970's, when articles relating to the Anglo-Saxon Conversion were not included. It is clear from this assessment of *Medieval Archaeology* that the Anglo-Saxon Conversion was of interest to the authors and readers, or perhaps to the editor in the first instance, of this journal in the 1950's and 1960's and again in the late 1990's. These fluctuations in the popularity of the topic within academic debate are explored more fully in Chapter Seven below.

Chapter Seven of this thesis comprises an analysis of the material published since 1950, including many of the articles represented in the above chart. Material published in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been increasingly easier to access in recent years. The copyright depositories at the British Library and the Cambridge University Library provided access to all of the relevant books. This area of data collection was greatly aided by the publication of several overarching edited volumes and thematic publications dealing with early medieval religion since the turn of the twenty-first century. These include Martin Carver's 2003 edited volume entitled *The Cross Goes North*, Martin Carver, Alex Sanmark and Sarah Semple's 2010 edited volume *Signals of Belief in Early England* and a variety of monographs including Malcolm Lambert's *Christians and Pagans*, published in 2010, Barbara Yorke's *Conversion of Britain*, published in 2006 and John Blair's 2005 *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*. These were accessed through the library catalogues enumerated above. With very few exceptions, the journal articles from the twentieth and twenty-first century that form the basis of Chapter 7 have been accessed through online databases and searchable online journal archives such as jstor.

A final area of exploration pertinent to the material published in the latter half of the twentieth and the first part of the twenty-first century focused on the review sections in the major relevant journals, especially *Medieval Archaeology*. It is through the formalized public academic debate found in reviews that some of the key controversies of the time were made available to the wider academic community. For example, John Hines used his 1999 review of Helen Geake's book to argue that the conventional idea of the 'Final Phase' (explored fully in Chapter 7) should not, as she suggested, be replaced by the idea of a 'Conversion Period' spanning from AD 600 to 850 (Hines 1999: 309). In publishing

his critique, he furthered dialogue on this long contested topic and therefore this type of review must be seen as a key part of current scholarly debate.

The archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion has composed a greater or lesser amount of the total scholarly output over time, depending on a variety of factors, some of which are explored below. These include, but are not limited to, contemporary political and religious debates, the heat of nationalist and sectarian fervor present in the wider cultural arena, fashion and scholarly trends. It is obviously impossible to include every text that did not mention the Conversion, as these vastly outnumber those that do, even at the height of interest in the subject; negative examples have therefore been included only where they provide useful contrast. Similarly, not every piece of scholarly literature that refers to the Conversion has been included; many scholars have mentioned the fact of the Conversion or studied the material of this period without providing an interpretive framework that can be seen to contribute to the wider understanding of the religious transition under discussion here.

The data collection and analysis for this thesis has therefore taken account of relevant published literature since 1500. Copyright libraries have been crucial. Long-running journal series have also been vital. Online indexes and resources have provided additional means of data gathering. This detailed interrogation has not only revealed patterns in the popularity of Anglo-Saxon topics over time relevant to the debates that follow, but has also provided the primary data for the thesis – revealing the methods, approaches and viewpoints of those studying the Anglo-Saxon Conversion and the relevance of archaeology to that debate across five centuries of study. This collected body of material is the core basis for the chapters that follow, which deal with the history of archaeological approaches to the conversion of the English.

Definition of Terms

Many of the terms used in this study can be problematized in a number of ways. Depending on one's perspective, it is possible to question the use of 'conversion', 'pagan', 'Anglo-Saxon' and potentially many other terms used throughout this thesis. While acknowledging the difficulty associated with these terms, I have continued to use them for two reasons: firstly, although they have been identified as problematic, in most cases no plausible alternative has been put into place which communicates the same ideas as succinctly. Secondly because, as this is an historical study, the terms used reflect the

historical usage appropriate to the time. The terms listed below, however, must be acknowledged here as problematic.

Most significant is the definition of the Conversion itself. Throughout this thesis, where capitalized, ‘the Conversion’ should be taken to mean the Anglo-Saxon conversion of the seventh century. All other uses should be taken to mean the process more generally. In recent years, the words used to describe this period have been identified as problematic (e.g. Kilbride 2000). ‘Conversion’ is often seen by scholars as the external declaration of allegiance to the new faith, while a distinction is made between this action and the process of ‘Christianization’; a process which can take much longer and involves the acceptance of the Christian paradigm as a whole (see Petts 2011: 12-14 for an overview). The debate over which words to use when describing the Conversion is a recent one. It has developed out of the specific context of the late twenty-first century and thus for the majority of the period covered in this thesis, ‘Conversion’ was the appropriate term.

Current scholarship on the subject accepts that defining this period is a complicated and contentious undertaking, particularly defining when the Conversion can be said to have finished. As this thesis demonstrates, while Bede’s date for the inception of the Conversion has been widely accepted, there has been variation in the perceived end date throughout time. We currently conceive of the Conversion Period as spanning the 250 years between c. 600 and c. 850 (see Geake 1997). This is based in part on artefactual studies, but, as shall become clear throughout the thesis, the Conversion was not always given such temporal depth. Written and material sources confirm the presence of Christians in Britain in the late Roman period (Frend 2003; Petts 2003), before the arrival of the Germanic settlers who characterize the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon period. Contemporary accounts of the Conversion period, however, especially Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*, strongly emphasized the Roman missionary actions which began in AD 597, minimizing both the Christianity of the Roman population of Britain and the Irish missions which had been taking place prior to that date (Colgrave and Mynors 1969). The debate surrounding the proper definition of the Conversion period is taken up fully below, but even as this cursory acknowledgement of the complexity of this topic has shown, there are many viewpoints, unanswered questions, unproven theories and unresolved narratives on the subject which render the term Conversion very problematic.

The word “pagan” is also a term which many take issue with. The Latin root *paganus*, as Chuvin demonstrated, had three disparate original meanings: “peasant”, “civilian” and “pagan” (Chuvin 1990: 8). According to this definition, “Pagani or pagans are quite

simply “people of the place”, town or country, who preserved their local customs” (Chuvín 1990: 9). Whatever the original meaning of the word, we can be almost certain that the people we describe with it would not have used it to describe themselves. The classical historian Ken Dowden has shown that ‘paganismus’, the root of our word ‘paganism’, “is a word invented by the fourth-century Christians so they can talk about ‘it’ in the same breath that they talk about Christianity and Judaism” (Dowden 2000: 3). The term pagan is often apologetically acknowledged by authors to be a shorthand or a compromise, used only because we lack an alternative (see Hutton 1991: vii for example). Today, “pre-Christian” is sometimes used to describe pagan populations, a term that connotes the disunity of the religious community of the time (there was no one unified pagan identity), but that is also dissatisfying in that it defines the term by its relationship to Christianity. Again, ‘pagan’ is employed in this context because of its established historical usage, which makes it apposite for this project.

Anglo-Saxon is also a term that can be considered problematic. For the purposes of this thesis, the term applies to the population and culture of the people of England during the period from the end of the Roman occupation of Britain to the coming of the Normans in 1066. Use of this term has been questioned by scholars in the past, not least because of its somewhat vague meanings (Reynolds 1985) and insufficiency in describing the population of what is now England at the time, which must have been at least partly (to use another contested and loaded term) Romano-British. We do not know how these people perceived themselves and “Anglo-Saxon” is at best a reifying compromise. Reynolds has documented the linguistic evidence which shows that the inhabitants of what we now call England were often called Saxons by outsiders and ‘*Angli*’ or English in their own written material (Reynolds 1985: 398). The adoption of the compound noun ‘Anglo-Saxon’ was a function of the need to distinguish the pre-Norman inhabitants of the area from later groups in the historical writings of the sixteenth century (Reynolds 1985). Despite the problematic nature of the label, it is the best, most relevant way we have of describing the people and the culture of early medieval Britain. It is also a term that was used to define the subject in the past and is thus the most appropriate term for this historiographical study. Therefore, as with ‘conversion’ and ‘pagan’, ‘Anglo-Saxon’ has been used throughout this thesis, in full knowledge of its inadequacy, but because of the lack of a viable alternative.

This study brings together the written material that forms the canon of academic knowledge on the subject of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion, with the goal of understanding the various contexts in which these depictions were created and how they were

transmitted across the centuries. The chronological structure of this study allows for an exploration of each of the objectives of the thesis in every chapter. This allows for an analysis of the development of the topic through time including the methods, theories and paradigms used to describe and interpret the Conversion. The ultimate end of this project is to deconstruct and interpret our own current conceptions of the Conversion and the historical processes that have delivered them to us. To that end, I ask, how have scholars explained the Conversion in the past, what did that explanation mean to and about them, what does it say about their approach and social context, and finally, what influences have these past trajectories of knowledge and method had on our contemporary understandings of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion? This thesis is an attempt to answer these questions.

For if we are shaped by our past, we also, in a very real sense, through the practice of archaeology, create that past for ourselves. The history of archaeology is the history of self-awareness (Renfrew 1996: vii).

Chapter One: Literature Review

In recent years, archaeologists have increasingly turned toward the reflexive study of their own discipline, seeking to understand the context for and biases inherent in their research through an understanding of the past. The central aim of this chapter is to explore and define the small amount of scholarship that can be identified as taking an historiographical approach to the archaeology of early medieval religious change in North-West Europe and, in particular, the Anglo-Saxon period. This literature is contextualized within a broader discussion of how the history of archaeology has developed - and continues to develop - as a discipline in its own right, both within Britain and internationally. Additional context is provided by an exploration of the literature on “Anglo-Saxonism”, the variety of ways in which an idealized Anglo-Saxon past has been incorporated into historical culture. This chapter, in effect, provides a form of meta-historiography, outlining a history of the history of history; interrogating how, and for what purposes, similar research has been done in the past.

This thesis is ultimately part of a larger trend in the academic world: a trend in which the reflective, and, in some cases, reflexive study of how and why scholarship is undertaken has been foregrounded. Born out of the postmodern shift toward reflexive practice and the acknowledgement of the “situated” nature of knowledge production, meta-disciplinary studies have become increasingly valued in many fields. This chapter is selective: it reviews a range of secondary literature that represents the scholarly paradigms used in the history of archaeology, with a particular focus on medieval archaeology, but it is not comprehensive. The key ways in which the wider scholarly landscape changed at the end of the twentieth century are reviewed here in order to show that recent concerns with reflexive and reflective historiographical concerns are not unique to the field of archaeology, but instead are part of a larger paradigm shift that transcends disciplinary boundaries.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term “historiography” has been used to describe what Aviezer Tucker calls the “meta-disciplinary philosophy” of history (Tucker 2011: 1), or what Michael Bentley has termed the “history of historiography” (Bentley 1999: x). The word historiography might more properly be defined as the writing of history, and it is in fact more commonly used to describe that process, but it has also been appropriated to mean the meta-disciplinary study of the *doing* of history. This term has in turn been borrowed to refer to a critical history of an academic discipline, such that – as in the context of this thesis – we now speak of the historiography of archaeology and mean the reflexive study of its past.

Anglo-Saxon archaeology has been relatively late in coming to the point at which a tradition of reflexive historiography has been recognized as an essential element of research, and the study of religion in Anglo-Saxon England has only *just* begun to be explored with reference to its past historical context. It was not until the post-modern emphasis on reflexivity had already begun to fade from other social science disciplines that historical archaeology in Britain began to take up the challenge of exposing its own epistemological paradigms and the historical contexts that formed them. It is, however, crucial to note that the vast majority of studies of Anglo-Saxon archaeology produced today lack any acknowledgement of the context in which past scholarship was created. Those few studies that have been undertaken have not yet been integrated into on-going contemporary research. The chapter below explores both the archaeological reaction to the late twentieth century shift within the social sciences and the later echo that can be found within the field of Anglo-Saxon archaeology since the turn of the twenty-first century.

History of Archaeology

Questions about how and why history has been written, the methodological and epistemological justifications for it, and the context in which it has been produced are all key to the meta-historical exploration of the discipline. In the English-speaking world, inquiry into the history of archaeology can be seen to have been influenced by similar trends in several related disciplines; history (Bentley 1999; H. V. White 1973, 1987), classics (Batstone 2006; Hardwick and Stray 2008; Martindale 1993), anthropology (Clifford and Marcus 1986) and the “hard” sciences (Kuhn 1970; Yeo 2001). These share a strong influence from the postmodern theoretical challenges of the later part of the twentieth century, which emphasized the importance of reflexive, reflective and self-aware research. These attempts at meta-disciplinary history all have in common an

interest in the nature of truth and the role of the scholar in the creation of knowledge. By taking into account the role of the historian, the reader, the observer and the scientist in the current day, these studies also question their place in the history of the discipline. Although we are now in a period that is considered by many to be “post-postmodern”, in the history of archaeology at least, there is a continued emphasis on looking at the scholarly past in a way that is both critical and reflexive, and also acknowledges the role of the scholar in the creation of knowledge. The approaches to scholarship described above have left their mark on the way that scholars from many disciplines conceptualize their work and its meaning in the world.

Archaeology has been slower to develop a true meta-historiographical tradition in the sense that has been described above. Despite the increasing emphasis on self-referential history in archaeology’s near disciplinary neighbors (history, classics, anthropology and the “hard” sciences) since the 1970s, academic archaeology has only recently begun to perform the same sort of self-examination. Since the middle of the twentieth century, scholars have studied and written about the history of archaeology, but the move towards a fully realized historiography, one that took a robustly critical and reflexive look at the development of the discipline, is much more recent. Whilst Glyn Daniel’s *One Hundred Years of Archaeology* (Daniel 1975), first published in 1950, and C.W. Ceram’s *Gods, Graves, and Scholars* (Ceram 1967), first published in 1951, are widely cited as the starting points for the sub-discipline of the history of archaeology, these were essentially narrative histories that lacked the necessary critical and reflexive perspective. This type of history continues to be written, often marketed to the non-specialist audience, with the aim of introducing key discoveries or important pioneers in the field. Almost all of these early attempts shared a strong focus on prehistoric archaeology and the almost total exclusion of historical archaeology from their narratives.

Bruce Trigger’s *History of Archaeological Thought*, first published in 1989, was a turning point in the study of the subject. In tracing the history of prehistoric archaeology, Trigger provided the discipline with a new framework for thinking about its past. His book revealed that it was possible to go beyond writing the history of great men and their awe-inspiring discoveries, and instead exposed a history of archaeology in its social context, thereby providing “a comparative viewpoint from which problems of subjectivity, objectivity and the gradual accumulation of knowledge” could be viewed and assessed (Trigger 2006: 1). This was a revolutionary way of thinking about archaeology and its past. Trigger’s text has become a key part of the undergraduate curriculum, and has had wide reaching implications for our understanding of the history of archaeology.

In recent years, studies of the history of archaeology have been undertaken on many scales: some have looked at it from the *longue durée* (Schnapp 1993), others have focused on a single period of time, whilst covering a wide geographical area (Díaz-Andreu 2007) and many have focused their analysis geographically, writing the history of the archaeology of one place over time (Andersson 1997; Broberg and Hasselmo 1992; Sklenar 1983). Other authors have focused on the development of various archaeological societies over time (Ebbatson 1994; MacGregor 2007c; Pearce 2007b; Piggott 1976). There also exists a strong biographical tradition in archaeology, the products of which can be seen as short episodes in the history of archaeology (Giles 2006; Hobley 1975; Jessup 1975; Sebire 2007). Although some biographical studies are excellent, many of these studies lack the requisite critical function, tending to describe rather than interrogate the practice of their subjects (c.f. M. C. Davis 2008). There have also been some studies which have focused on the development of interpretations of a single important site (Campbell 1992). Published research has often concentrated on the use of archaeology in perpetuating nationalist political agendas (Díaz-Andreu 1996; Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Kohl and Fawcett 1995). The history of archaeology has also been conducted with the contemporary theoretical concerns of the archaeology of the day in mind, as in Kenneth Hudson's 1981, *A Social History of Archaeology: The British Experience* (Hudson 1981), which was concerned with economic and class-based influences on the development of archaeology. Others have traced the development of archaeological theory through time (Johnson 1999; Trigger 2006), or sought to expose the contributions of women (so often overlooked), to the development of the discipline (Claasen 1994; Díaz-Andreu and Stig Sørensen 1998; du Cros and Smith 1993; N. M. White et al. 1999). Historiography is also now often done as a matter of course when writing the introduction and literature review for a new study and it is customary to both acknowledge and critique those who have dealt with the subject before. Finally, textbooks often aim to provide students with some background to the theories and methods of modern archaeology through the inclusion of historiographical details (e.g. Renfrew and Bahn 1991).

It is clear then that the history of archaeology has been, and continues to be, undertaken on a range of scales of analysis. This diversity of approaches allows for the production of a rich and varied literature on the subject, but also exposes the lack of a defined methodology for studying the history of archaeology. The inescapable truth is that historiographical studies in archaeology are, almost without exception, works of history done by scholars whose background and training is not historical but archaeological

(Trigger 2008: 361). This may explain, in part at least, why the history of archaeology lacks a coherent theoretical or methodological paradigm. In 1987 a conference entitled “Explaining Archaeology’s Past: The Method and Theory of the History of Archaeology” (proceedings published as Christenson 1989b) was held in the United States with the aim of correcting a perceived lack of concern for “the methods of historical research or for the theoretical biases that archaeologists may bring to their interpretation of archaeology’s past” (Christenson 1989a: x). The conference organizer ultimately concluded that it was too early in the history of the discipline to come to any concrete conclusions about methods or theories (Christenson 1989a: x) and there has been no organized attempt since to establish a methodological or theoretical grounding for the work that is being done.

Despite this lack of an established methodology, there have been several excellent studies undertaken in recent years on the history of archaeology, for example Richard Hingley’s work on the archaeology of Roman Britain (Hingley 2000, 2008). In his first book on the subject, *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen: The imperial origins of Roman archaeology* (2000), Hingley argued that, especially in the period between 1860 and 1930, the image of a dominant Roman empire conquering the Britons was a key source of imperial identity and a sense of historical self for the modern British Empire (Hingley 2000: 97-104). He has shown how this use of Roman past for nationalistic and colonialist purposes had a circular effect in which the archaeology was used in the creation of identity, and that identity in turn influenced the way in which archaeological remains were interpreted (Hingley 2000: 1-2). His later volume (Hingley 2008) explored these same issues as far back as the mid-sixteenth century, exposing the longer term development of this phenomenon. In both cases, the emphasis is on how this long period of development has shaped and informed the archaeology undertaken in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The history of antiquarianism has also been frequently studied, both separately from archaeology and as a precursor to it (see Sweet 2004 for example). In an important work of historiography, Arnaldo Momigliano traced the origins of antiquarianism back to the classical past (Momigliano 1950, 1990). It has been argued, however, that the history of antiquarianism, which in this thesis (and in many other historiographical works (see Piggott 1976; 1989 for example)) is treated as part of the history of archaeology, should in fact be seen as a unique historical phenomenon (Bann 1990: 110-5; Hingley 2008: 6-9). Stephen Bann has argued that to see antiquarianism as the direct ancestor of archaeology strips antiquarianism of its complexity and negates its contributions to history,

relegating antiquarians to the position of “black sheep” amongst historians (Bann 1990: 110). Whilst it is certainly true that antiquarianism was simultaneously both more complex, encompassing many disciplines that we now see as discrete subjects, (Levine 1986: 5) and simpler, prior to the institution of modern epistemological standards, than modern archaeology; archaeology (like geology, philology, paleontology, genealogy and many other modern fields of study) can be said to have had its origin in antiquarian activities. It is there that we must look for the birth and early development of the discipline as we know it today.

The role of biography in the writing of the history of archaeology, mentioned above as a unique strand of research, is one that must be addressed. Many antiquarians and archaeologists have been the subject of biographies in obituaries or in the form of more extended remembrances, while still others have been the subjects of more extended in-depth biographical research. Douglas Givens argued that the role of biography in the history of archaeology (or in fact any aspect of intellectual history) is “relevant only if the actions of individual contributors are set within the intellectual, historical and sociological climate in which the contributions are made” (Givens 1992a: 55). It is this contextualization that is key to producing a biographical study that says something meaningful and critical about the history of archaeology. Without this key piece, biographical research has the tendency to become either too adulatory or too judgmental, celebrating or condemning without understanding the context in which the studies were carried out and what they meant within their own context. More recently, Marc-Antoine Kaeser wrote about the role of “biography as microhistory”, suggesting that individual archaeologists can be seen as keys to the larger context in which they worked (Kaeser 2008: 9). While biographical studies have been crucial to the development of the history of archaeology and have been relied upon in this study to provide additional detail, they do not offer the type of large-scale perspective sought in this project.

There are critics of this new emphasis on reflexive historiography in archaeology. Martin Carver has written that, “modern historiography, or its archaeological equivalent, seems concerned to strip away the creative output of every previous researcher in order to reveal a hidden agenda, preferably something vaguely unpleasant and reprehensible” (Carver 2009: 81). Carver’s point is well put; when done badly, historiography can be nothing more than an airing of grievances against past archaeologists, whether they be academic or personal, and has the potential to be just as much affected by its milieu as the body of work on which it focuses. However, when done well, historiographical studies of our discipline have the potential to enlighten us about the nature of our own practice and

to provide us with a deep, layered and textured context for the work that we produce today.

The History of Medieval Archaeology

The emphasis of historical studies of archaeology has generally been on prehistoric archaeology. Historical archaeology, where it is addressed at all, has been generally relegated to a side-note, with the exception of some works focused on the position of historical archaeology in relation to texts. In his 1998 book, *Between Artifacts and Texts*, the Swedish medieval archaeologist Anders Andrén attempted to draw together what he terms the “historical archaeologies”, in order to provide a large scale overview of the relationship between artefacts and texts (Anders Andrén 1998: 6-7). In doing so, he includes a short section on the history of medieval archaeology in Europe, stating that “Medieval archaeology can be seen as the shadow cast by classical archaeology. It is both its antithesis and its copy” (Anders Andrén 1998: 25). Although he addresses the early development briefly, for Andrén it is not until the early nineteenth century that medieval archaeology became the source of many European nationalist origin stories, as much as an example of correct morality (Anders Andrén 1998: 26). Andrén’s text remains unique in its ability to tie together the disparate strands of historical archaeology both historically and thematically in a way that serves to emphasize both the diversity of approaches and the connections between them. Although he provides a reflexive perspective on the study of medieval archaeology, Andrén’s true focus is on historical archaeology as it exists today.

Medieval archaeology is frequently seen as slow to adopt shifts in archaeological theory (see Gilchrist 2009: 386-7 for a summary of this debate), and it has been similarly reticent to take on the reflexive study of its own history. There are a few exceptions (see Clarke 1993; Hinton 1983) but it is important to emphasize how rare this type of scholarship remains. There have been a limited number of critical studies of medieval archaeology, such as the volume edited by David Austin and Leslie Alcock following a series of papers given at the World Archaeological Congress in 1986 (Austin and Alcock 1990), many of which took a very critical look at the relevance of medieval archaeology. Although reflexive, these studies again lacked historical context for the past studies they critiqued, leaving them with an artificially flattened view of the discipline’s past. In the context of the theoretical upheavals of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the aim of this type of reflexive study was to establish a continuing relevance for medieval archaeology in a

changing world, as Peter Ucko's foreword to the volume makes clear (Ucko 1990: xii), rather than to explore the dangerously out-of-touch past.

It has only been within the last decade that medieval archaeology in Britain has begun to come to terms with its past. An important step toward rectifying the imbalance was taken with Chris Gerrard's 2003 book, *Medieval Archaeology: Understanding Traditions and Contemporary Approaches*, in which he argued that "the development of interest in medieval material culture has always been contingent upon wider social, cultural, economic and political issues" (Gerrard 2003: xiii). This was the first time that the field of medieval archaeology as a whole was presented as a fully contextualized and multi-dimensional cultural product. This was an important shift in the way that we understand both the past and the contemporary incarnation of the discipline. By combining the study of the history of the discipline with an understanding of the influence of the context on archaeological understandings of the past, this book applied the methods of critical historiography to medieval archaeology for the first time.

Another recent volume, edited by Roberta Gilchrist and Andrew Reynolds and published in 2009, entitled *Reflections: 50 Years of Medieval Archaeology*, was the product of a conference held to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Society for Medieval Archaeology (Gilchrist and Reynolds 2009). The chapters in their volume largely address a period that is covered only briefly in Chapter Seven of this thesis, encompassing 1957 to 2007. Many of the papers focus on the changes since 1981, when the twenty-fifth anniversary was celebrated with a similar volume (Hinton 1983). Several of the papers included in this volume address the history of the Society from its inception in the 1950s (Gerrard 2009b; D. M. Wilson 2009), whilst others trace the impact of scientific developments and changing theoretical viewpoints, including landscape approaches (Rippon 2009) and social theory (Gilchrist 2009), on the nature of medieval archaeology since the middle of the last century. The authors included in this volume all focused on the relatively recent past and generally do not offer a socially contextualized view of the history of medieval archaeology. They show, however, that there is a newly realized willingness to engage with the disciplinary history of medieval archaeology in ways that have not previously been undertaken.

Although the study of the English early medieval past was frequently undertaken in isolation from the wider early medieval context, current understandings of the period argue for a more holistic European view and emphasize the connected nature of the regions bordering on the North Sea. There are a number of historiographical inquiries

with relevance for the British discussion. The history of early medieval archaeology in France and Germany has been studied in depth by Bonnie Effros, whose work focused primarily on scholarly, artistic and popular ideas about the Frankish and Merovingian past in the nineteenth century and beyond (Effros 2003, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). Many of the important trends that Effros identified in nineteenth-century nationalist archaeology were common to many European countries, a phenomenon that has been studied on a global scale by Marga Díaz-Andreu (Díaz-Andreu 2007). Again, however, the relevance of the European material to this study is limited by the insular nature of many of the past studies of the English early medieval past.

Taken together, the studies discussed above comprise a dynamic, increasingly valued field of study in which work is being carried out on a large number of different scales. The gaps highlighted by Bruce Trigger in 2001, however, when he wrote that there were “too few studies of the institutional structures of the discipline, of the impact of funding on archaeological theory and practice, of how archaeology has defined itself as a field, and of other sociological aspects of the production of archaeological knowledge” (reprinted as Trigger 2008: 377) still remain unfilled. It seems highly likely that this is a field that will continue to grow and change in the next several years, as more work is done. Developments such as the newly created Centre for the History of Archaeology at the University of Kent show that this is a field that has not yet reached its peak.

Medievalism and Anglo-Saxonism

This study is necessarily interdisciplinary in terms of its subject and the types of secondary literature that are relied on throughout. The focus is on archaeological research and the ways in which the early medieval texts were materialized through scholarly interpretation of physical remains. This is a process that cannot be separated from the larger context of medievalism and Anglo-Saxonism: a context that combines historical, philological, literary, theological, art historical and political scholarship. Unlike the history of Anglo-Saxon archaeology as a discrete discipline, the history of Anglo-Saxonism has been well documented in the literature. Particular attention has been paid to the use of the Anglo-Saxon past in the creation of racist and nationalist identities in the nineteenth century, a subject that concerns many of the authors explored below. It is important to note that archaeology and antiquarianism are often included in these large-scale studies of the history of Anglo-Saxonism, but their unique relationship to the material remains can be overshadowed or lost altogether within a large-scale study of the wider scholarly climate.

In 1917, Eleanor Adams wrote the history of sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century linguistic scholarship, published as a book entitled *Old English Scholarship in England from 1566-1800* (Adams 1917). This early analysis recognized the primary importance of the Reformation in stimulating academic and popular interest in the Anglo-Saxon, a theme that has carried through all subsequent work:

So confusing was the unrest of the Reformation that men could not distinguish clearly between the affairs of civil and ecclesiastical life. In order to lay any foundation for the new institutions, the Reformers had to establish a precedent for their beliefs. Such precedent they sought in the liturgy and sermons of the 'primitive church', and in the laws of their Anglo-Saxon forebears. Their first concern was to justify, by historical documents, their attitude towards the sacrament, the secular privileges of the clergy, and the use of the Scriptures in the vernacular (Adams 1917: 11).

Adams' analysis was focused on the projects undertaken during the early modern period to translate and interpret Old English texts. This early attempt to provide a contextualized history of Anglo-Saxon scholarship was not taken up by the wider academic community, however, until the 1980s and 1990s, when both "medievalism" and "Anglo-Saxonism" began to be studied by historians of academic culture.

One of the most important books for understanding the study of the medieval past in context is Norman Cantor's *Inventing the Middle Ages*, a book which exposed the twentieth century origins of academic interest in the later medieval period (Cantor 1991). In Cantor's view, the increase of interest in the medieval past after the end of the Victorian period "allows medievalists to find in the Middle Ages a mirror image of themselves or parallel manifestations to trends and happenings in the twentieth century", which makes for an environment of what he calls "provocative image making of a medieval past that conforms to our current emotional and public needs" (Cantor 1991: 28). In Cantor's work, we see the strong influence of the postmodern idea of "lenses", or as he puts it, "the prism of the dominant concepts of our own thought worlds" (Cantor 1991: 37) through which we cannot help but view the world. Cantor's study has been influential in the development of a history of scholarship of the later Middle Ages, and has also been influential in the development of our understanding of the uses of the early medieval past.

Although related to the larger trends in medievalism, Anglo-Saxonism has also been studied separately. The study of Anglo-Saxonism can be said to have begun in the early 1980s with two key texts: Reginald Horsman's *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of*

American Racial Anglo-Saxonism (1981) and Hugh MacDougall's *Racial Myth in English History* (1982). These studies explored the history of the idea of English racial superiority and the ways in which the Anglo-Saxon past was called upon to support this racial mythology in both the United States and the United Kingdom. In the following three decades, several studies were published which took up this theme, including Allan J. Frantzen's *Desire for Origins* (1990) and the edited volume *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity* (Frantzen and Niles 1997). Together these studies argue, as John D. Niles writes in his afterword to the latter volume, that "Anglo-Saxon England is *nothing other than what it has been perceived to be* by historically grounded human beings, from the time of the Anglo-Saxons to the present moment. It is an idea, not a thing" (John D. Niles 1997: 209, italics in the original). All of these studies and the others that have been written in their wake have attempted to approach an understanding of the power of that idea and how it influenced the people and institutions that have lived with it since it was conceptualized in the writing of the early medieval historians.

A less controversial approach to the subject was taken by Carl Berkhout and Milton Gatch, who edited the volume *Anglo-Saxon Scholarship: The First Three Centuries* (1982). In their introduction they justify the necessity of their volume by stating that "Serious students of Anglo-Saxon literary history, perhaps more than scholars in other areas of medieval studies, constantly encounter their predecessors in the field" (Berkhout and Gatch 1982: ix), and therefore require a way to evaluate and contextualize previous work. Although one might question their implication that this is somehow unique to Anglo-Saxon studies (surely all academics encounter their predecessors), the collection includes some useful papers on the study of the Anglo-Saxon past between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Although this volume was clearly not intended to project a unified narrative, the authors of this varied collection of papers presented a view of Anglo-Saxon scholarship as a discipline with a past.

Several scholars have written about the importance of the Norman Conquest as a significant historical moment in the formation of Anglo-Saxonism. In 1954, the Marxist historian Christopher Hill wrote an essay entitled *The Norman Yoke*, in which he traced the development of the idea of an Anglo-Saxon origin for democracy and equality throughout the period from 1066 to the mid-twentieth century (C. Hill 1954):

Before 1066 the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of the country lived as free and equal citizens, governing themselves through representative institutions. The Norman Conquest deprived them of this liberty, established the tyranny of an alien king and landlords. But the people did not forget the

rights they had lost. They fought continuously to recover them, with varying success (C. Hill 1954: 11)

In Hill's view, Anglo-Saxonism, defined in opposition to the Norman past, lay at the heart of nearly every English rebellion and revolution, and periodically (in the late seventeenth century and mid-nineteenth century, for instance) played an important role in the mainstream historical discourse as well (C. Hill 1954: 58). The myth of a lost Anglo-Saxon democracy can be likened to the myth of a lost Anglo-Saxon religious purity. Both concepts have been put to similar political and religious uses in the past.

In 1990 Clare Simmons published *Reversing the Conquest*, in which she argued that "The Saxon-and-Norman opposition reveals the extent to which self-definition is reflexive; having written themselves into history, nineteenth-century writers and readers could find themselves there" (Simmons 1990: 5). Simmons, a scholar of nineteenth-century literature, highlighted the Victorian desire to locate their origins in the Saxon rather than the Norman past in the works of many of the great writers of the day (Simmons 1990). In a subsequent paper on the study of Old English in the Victorian period, Simmons shows that the English people and the royal family were seen to be of Teutonic origin, whilst the unpopular aristocracy were considered to be of Norman descent, and therefore less than English (Simmons 1992: 210). This seemingly contradictory state of affairs pitted the Hanoverian monarchy and the strongly Teutonic-identified lower classes against the modern incarnation of the Norman overlords. Thus Hill's notion of the Norman Yoke can be seen to permeate the nineteenth-century literary culture as well as the political environment.

The most recent exploration of the history of the study of the Anglo-Saxon period can be found in Paul Hill's *The Anglo-Saxons: The Verdict of History* (P. Hill 2006), a book that analyses the methods by which the Anglo-Saxon past has been explored and the socio-cultural influences that have had an impact on the conclusions drawn by historians and antiquarians. In it, Hill exposes both the popular and the scholarly visions of the Anglo-Saxon past and the relationship between them, in what he calls "an attempt to restore the balance in favour of an analysis and celebration of how the Anglo-Saxons have been variously treated over the centuries without the recourse to invective or triumphalism this sometimes engenders in people" (P. Hill 2006: 9). Hill's book is exceptionally wide-ranging, taking a holistic view in order to scrutinize the variety of ways in which the idea of the Anglo-Saxon past has been received by successive generations. This analysis, unlike many of those mentioned above, uses the historical context as its unit of analysis, including the perspectives of historians, antiquarians, writers, artists and non-specialists

in order to show that ideas about the Anglo-Saxon past transcended disciplinary and cultural boundaries.

In 2006 a short pamphlet, entitled *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, explored the history of Anglo-Saxonism through the study of both the body of knowledge about the Anglo-Saxon past and, using the analogy of Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, Anglo-Saxonism as an essentialized and essentializing cultural concept (Hilton 2006: 7). This pamphlet is little more than an annotated bibliography, but compressing the literature in this way reveals larger themes, many of which are reflected in this thesis, such as the Romantic Anglo-Saxonism of the late eighteenth century and the Victorian obsession with the Teutonic past (Hilton 2006: 21-4). Both Hill and Hilton's books are written for a general rather than a specialist audience, and their style reflects this. The production of books on the subject for a general audience demonstrates that in the twenty-first century, the idea of Anglo-Saxonism is established as a popular topic – no longer confined to the academic sphere.

Many of the studies discussed above include the work of antiquarians and archaeologists in their conceptualization of Anglo-Saxon studies, including it alongside history, philology, English literature, art history, architecture and various other disciplines. This is entirely appropriate for the scale at which they are considering the topic; it would not be useful to isolate the contributions of any one of these disciplines and archaeology is only a small part – as well as a relatively late addition – of the larger dialogue. The unique position of archaeology, however, as a subject that brings together the written and linguistic evidence but also the material remains, necessitates a short exploration of its own individual history on a smaller scale.

Anglo-Saxon Archaeology in Historiographical Perspective

Despite the culture of scholarship surrounding Anglo-Saxonism, Anglo-Saxon archaeology has yet to be fully explored in historiographical terms. Unlike the critical history of archaeology and the historiographical study of Anglo-Saxonism, both of which took place in the 1980s and 1990s at the height of post-modern scholarship, the reflexive historical study of Anglo-Saxon archaeology is a product of the post-post-modern era at the beginning of the twenty-first century and remains limited in scope. Archaeologists of this period have yet to fully and critically engage with their disciplinary past, as several authors have recently noted (Content and Williams 2010; Hutton 2010). Prior to the year 2000, historiography appears merely as a matter of course in the production of a

literature review, and never as a means to its own end. For example, a short overview of the history of the subject is provided by Kelley Wickham-Crowley by way of an introduction to Catherine Karkov's reader of basic Anglo-Saxon archaeology texts (Wickham-Crowley 1999), but this is essentially descriptive and includes neither a discussion of the wider social context nor any attempt at critique. In a conference paper published in 1997, Rosemary Cramp provided a brief critical summary of the ways in which Anglo-Saxon archaeology has interacted with the changing theoretical landscape of the second half of the twentieth century (Cramp 1997: 272-4). This was the state of the field until around the year 2000, when scholars began to explore the past of the discipline in a critically reflexive way.

In part, this relatively slow uptake may be due to a lack of consensus about the value of historiography in archaeology and whether it should best be undertaken by historians or archaeologists. The few examples of historiography written before the turn of the twenty-first century were generally dismissive of the history of the discipline. For example, in a paper given on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Society for Medieval Archaeology in 1981, when Tania Dickinson summarized the history of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, she dated the proper study of it back only to the mid-1950s, when the Society was founded (Dickinson 1983: 34). With the exception of Baldwin Brown, she dismissed all of the previous scholarship on the subject as too narrowly construed and too focused on the burial data to be useful (Dickinson 1983: 33). In her analysis, it was the large-scale excavations (and, importantly, publication) of sites like Mucking, Yeavinger and West Stow in the second half of the twentieth century that had truly been the beginning of Anglo-Saxon archaeology (Dickinson 1983: 34). Perhaps this analysis was influenced by the venue in which the paper was given and the event it was intended to celebrate, but it is notable for its denial of the deeper past of the subject.

In the 2009 volume published to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Society for Medieval Archaeology, Rosemary Cramp summarized the changes that have taken place in the development of early medieval archaeology in Britain in the latter half of the twentieth and early part of the twenty-first centuries (Cramp 2009). Her chapter highlighted key areas in which important shifts in the study of the Anglo-Saxon past were made, citing many of the same projects as Dickinson's 1983 paper (Mucking, Yeavinger and West Stow) and adding several more from the following 25 years (West Heslerton, Brandon and Flixborough for example) (Cramp 2009: 51-3). Cramp's chapter celebrated the changes that have taken place in the variety of evidence that is being used and the questions that are being asked of it in the present day, pointing to the fact that in

the late 1940s “around 1130 cemeteries were known and about half a dozen settlement sites” (Cramp 2009: 50). When taken together with Dickinson’s paper, Cramp’s chapter shows how far the study of the early medieval period has come, especially in terms of the use of scientific techniques and landscape approaches, in its quest to move beyond the burial evidence (Cramp 2009: 57). Neither of these works, however, addressed the subject within the wider socio-political context, but rather frame the development of early medieval archaeology in relation to itself, and to a lesser degree in relation to developments in the field of archaeology more generally. They therefore lack the type of time-depth and full contextualization that is needed to understand not simply when Anglo-Saxon archaeology changed, but how and why those changes were brought about.

Fully contextualized historiographical studies of Anglo-Saxon archaeology remain rare. An important exception is the few studies that have been produced on the history of the migration debate. These include the work of Sam Lucy (Lucy 1998, 2002) and Catherine Hills (2003), who have shown that the interest in the origins of the Anglo-Saxon populations that arrived in Britain and how completely they replaced the existing population is one that has been politically and historically laden. Lucy argued for the centrality of the migration question as the “fundamental goal” of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, a fact that has only recently begun to change (Lucy 2002: 144). Lucy’s study follows several key studies from the 1980s and early 1990s that questioned the validity of the early medieval ethnic categories that have come down to us from the textual sources (Amory 1994; Geary 1983; Reynolds 1985). She showed how a deeply ingrained nationalistic belief in the incoming Germanic population as the original ancestors of the English have affected the ways in which we have understood not only the migration but also the fate of the existing population (Lucy 2002: 168). In her book on the *Early Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of East Yorkshire*, Lucy rejected what she saw as a systemic overreliance on textual sources and the view of the archaeological evidence as straightforward and easily interpreted, and instead argued for a fully contextual and localized study of the data from within a more scientifically rigorous paradigm (Lucy 1998: 1, 26).

In the context of an edited volume on the subject of Britons in Anglo-Saxon England, Catherine Hills wrote a chapter that expanded this reflexive view of the migration debate to include contemporary ideas about the survival of native British populations (Hills 2007). Her paper, entitled *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, argues that our attitudes toward the past (and therefore our scholarship) “arise from our multiple and changing individual and collective identities, which condition the ways in which we see and interpret the world, past or present” (Hills 2007: 16). In the context of the debate over British survivals in the

Anglo-Saxon period and the question of what degree of modern British ancestry should be assigned to the native British population, Hills argued that personal and group identity play (and have always played) a key role in what position any individual scholar will espouse (Hills 2007: 25-6). Hills also showed how the production of the textual sources by those who had a vested interest in the subject has allowed for a one-dimensional view of the population of early medieval England (Hills 2003: 29). This view was corroborated by the work of the historian Barbara Yorke, who showed the extent to which the textual sources, especially the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, were created with the establishment of a Germanic origin myth as a goal (Yorke 2008: 16-7). Taken together, these authors challenged the bulk of existing knowledge about the migration and the composition of the population of England in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. The migration debate is key to our understandings of Anglo-Saxon archaeology because, like the study of the Conversion, it stands at the intersection of text, material culture and contemporary social context and provides a clear example of how these mutually influence and shape each other.

The study of Anglo-Saxonism in British archaeology is closely tied to the research done by Bettina Arnold on Germanism in the archaeology of that country in the early twentieth century (B. Arnold 1990, 2002, 2006). Both Germanism and Anglo-Saxonism descend from the shared Teutonism of the nineteenth century and thus her work on the German history is crucial. Arnold's work primarily explores the role of prehistoric archaeology in building and supporting Nazi ideology, exposing the uses to which the past were put by party archaeologists (B. Arnold 2002: 103). The modern German people were seen as the end of an racial continuum which originated as far back as the Upper Paleolithic period (B. Arnold 2002: 97), and although the emphasis was not on the early medieval remains, they were certainly included in that continuum. Arnold's work has been influential in understanding the archaeological research conducted during the twentieth century throughout Europe and must be seen as crucial to our understanding of Anglo-Saxonism.

The study of Anglo-Saxon archaeology has also been conducted on smaller scales, including the production of bibliographies of many of the key individuals who worked in this field. In 2002, the obituaries of twenty-eight Anglo-Saxon scholars from a variety of disciplines who were members of the British Academy were reprinted and published together in a volume that spanned from Whitley Stokes (1830-1909) to Thomas Julian Brown (1928-1987) (Lapidge 2002). In his preface, the editor Michael Lapidge stated that these obituaries, taken together, provide an "intellectual history of how the study of this

vast field developed during the past century and a half" (Lapidge 2002: vii). Although the list of individuals memorialized in this volume (and the names of those who wrote the memorials) provides an interesting glimpse into the scholarly network present within the British Academy, the tone of the contributions is laudatory and uncritical; appropriate for an obituary, but not for an intellectual history.

One of the most prolific writers on the subject of Anglo-Saxon archaeologists and antiquarians in recent years has been Howard Williams, an author who has written several important papers on the work of William Wyllie (Williams 2008) and John Mitchell Kemble (Williams 2006a). Williams' work focuses mainly on the Victorian period and the archaeological innovations that took place during this period of extremely voracious interest in the Anglo-Saxon past (Williams 2006b, 2006a, 2007b, 2007a). In doing so, he places the credit (and the blame) for the development of Anglo-Saxon archaeology on the Victorian barrow diggers, a position that is not unproblematic. Although there can be no doubt that interest in the Anglo-Saxon period peaked in the mid-nineteenth century, so narrow a focus denies the Victorian Anglo-Saxonists a past of their own. Moreover, to place so much emphasis on the limited excavations of the day does a disservice to the broader community of Anglo-Saxon scholars working simultaneously on both text and other types of material evidence, such as churches and sculpture.

Historiography remains poorly integrated into the majority of early medieval archaeological research. The wide majority of scholarship on archaeological and historical representations of the Anglo-Saxon past has focused almost exclusively on the nationalistic agenda that can be seen in the work of many scholars of the period. This thesis does not dispute that analysis, but rather seeks to add a further dimension, that of religion. It is argued in the following chapters that the national origin story put forth by the Anglo-Saxon scholars of the past 500 years was not merely seen as the root of Englishness, but also, crucially, the beginning of a Christian English identity and studies of the discipline should reflect this fact. It should not be possible to study the political dimension of the study of the Anglo-Saxon past without also taking into account the religious origin story embedded within the nationalist narrative.

Historiography of the Archaeology of Early Medieval Religion

Although, as this thesis argues, the archaeological study of Anglo-Saxon paganism, Christianity and the Conversion has roots that can be traced as far back as the early

medieval period, it has only been within the last decade that historiographical work on the subject began to be produced. One of the most influential texts on the history of conversion in Europe, Richard Fletcher's *The Conversion of Europe: From Paganism to Christianity 371-1386 AD* (1997), includes no mention of the scholarly past of his chosen subject (although this may be at least in part because his text already fills more than 500 pages). In 1996, W. H. C. Frend published a comprehensive survey, entitled *The Archaeology of Early Christianity: A History*, which charted the global development of the subject from excavations carried out by the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine, to the current day (Frend 1996). The focus of this study is primarily on late antique Christianity, and Frend is careful to emphasize how unique England was because its "continuity with Latin Christianity was lost" (Frend 1996: xviii). For the most part, with the exception of the site of Sutton Hoo, Frend's study is not concerned with the Anglo-Saxon Christianity in Britain, but rather with Roman Christianity and the pagan response to it (Frend 1996: 255-7). Therefore, although Frend's book provides a valuable historical context on a global scale for the work carried out on Anglo-Saxon Christianity, it does not expand our knowledge of the specific context in which studies of Anglo-Saxon religion were carried out. It seems almost unbelievable that, despite an overwhelming body of critical literature describing the biases and social contexts of the primary textual sources, the secondary sources have not been submitted to the same treatment. Can Bede's eighth century Christianity be considered to influence his work any more or any less than that of the Reverend Bryan Faussett in the eighteenth century or John Mitchell Kemble in the nineteenth? Should the context in which an ancient text such as the *Ecclesiastical History* was created be any more crucial to our understanding than those contexts in which it was received, translated, mediated and passed on to us?

The earliest work on the scholarly response to early medieval religion was by the historian E. G. Stanley in his 1975 book, *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism*. In it he argued that studies of early medieval Britain had a bias which "exalts whatever in the Germanic literature of the Dark Ages is primitive (that is, pagan), and belittles or even fails to understand whatever in it is civilized, learned, and cosmopolitan" (Stanley 1975: 3). Stanley argued that the origin of Anglo-Saxon studies can be found in the Romantic Movement and the contemporaneous surge in German nationalism (Stanley 1975: 6). For him, the Romantic emphasis on the wild and untamed landscape led to an increased interest in the noble pagan savage at the expense of the early medieval Christian (Stanley 1975: 14). Stanley's book covers both the German and English scholarship of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and whilst his theory, as we shall see below, is not confirmed for the English material, he makes a stronger case for the German scholarship

on the subject. Stanley's work must be seen as having influenced subsequent generations of scholars, including Ronald Hutton (see Hutton 1991, 2009).

Another key work on the study of early medieval religion was written by John Hines, who questioned, from an ethnographic perspective, our ability to understand religion in the past (Hines 1997: 376-7). He ultimately argued that Anglo-Saxon paganism was only knowable through the contrast between it and early Christianity, a contrast which makes it visible in the archaeological record and which we can understand because we have access to the textual records of the early Christians (Hines 1997: 396). Crucial to this analysis is Hines' assertion that "We may only be able to recognize as religion what is substantially similar to religion as we know it. Conversely, of course, we have to discuss religion in terms that make sense to us" (Hines 1997: 377). Hines sees Anglo-Saxon paganism, like prehistoric religion, as too far up Hawkes's ladder of inference to be comprehensible (Hines 1997: 378). This chapter, although critical and somewhat reflexive, focuses on contemporary studies and thus lacks chronological depth – the ideas he critiques are not new and cannot be fully understood without exploring the contexts in which they were created.

Most of the studies that have been undertaken on this subject attempt large-scale understandings of attitudes toward early medieval religion, but an article by John Moreland, published in 1999, looks at the history of a single item, the Bradbourne Cross from Derbyshire (Moreland 1999). From its original carving in the early medieval period, to the eighteenth century when it was rediscovered, to the late nineteenth century and beyond, this ninth or tenth century cross has continued to play a role in the religious debates that surround it (Moreland 1999: 209). Moreland argued that the early archaeologists and local communities that re-erected the monument actively constructed a meaning for it which filled a societal need specific to the late nineteenth century, and ultimately had little to do with the symbols as they would have been intended by their early medieval carver (Moreland 1999: 198). This study ties the biography of a single object into the wider trends of Anglo-Saxonism, exposing the ways in which the interpretations of this stone cross have changed and shifted through time.

Although the number of studies that acknowledge the history of the discipline have increased in recent years, the majority of scholars have not yet integrated historiographical perspectives into their scholarship. For example, a recent synthesis of the evidence for the Conversion in East Anglia, based on a cognitive theoretical perspective and published by Richard Hoggett in 2010 exemplifies the extent to which

the history of the discipline is included in the literature review of later studies. Hoggett includes a short overview of the history of theoretical approaches to the Conversion, including the processual, post-processual and cognitive attempts at establishing a way of understanding religion, and specifically religious belief, from an archaeological perspective (Hoggett 2010: 9-13). Whilst useful for Hoggett's study, this introduction to the subject is problematic for two reasons: first because it lacks the dimensionality that a contextualized consideration of the historiography of the subject would bring to the study and second because it casts Hoggett's study in light of only its very recent history, beginning in the 1960s.

Two of the chapters in a recent edited volume on the subject of Anglo-Saxon religion have highlighted the need for an increased reflexivity on the part of scholars of this subject (Content and Williams 2010; Hutton 2010). In their exploration of the history of the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon paganism, Content and Williams argue that "Anglo-Saxon archaeology still faces the challenge of opening itself to self-critique and genuine dialogue over both its history and its future" (Content and Williams 2010: 183). Hutton's afterword to the volume pushes this point even further, by critiquing Content and Williams' chapter and the discipline generally for assuming that somehow the scholarship of the current day escapes the biases and cultural baggage of past studies (Hutton 2010: 202). It is clear from these papers, and, as we shall see below, from David Petts' 2011 book, that this type of scholarly reflexivity is slowly becoming accepted as necessary, even if it has not yet been fully implemented.

Ronald Hutton describes the attempt to study Anglo-Saxon religion as akin to trying to analyse the contents of a can for which we have no opener. We are able to see the can, we can read the label and we have some previous experience with the types of things that usually come in cans, but we have no way of actually opening this specific can to see what is inside (Hutton 2010: 202). It is possible to refine and improve our ability to read what is printed on the label and our description of the exterior of the can, but we remain limited in our ability to develop a better understanding of what is inside. For Hutton, the nature of the evidence (both textual and artefactual) for early medieval religion is such that we will likely never do more than produce competing theories of how the exterior of the can relates to the contents. It is in part the impossibility of ever knowing what early medieval religion was like that makes the variety of interpretations such an interesting subject to study – there is no core of essential truth that can be found by stripping away layers of interpretation. Hutton is an historian – albeit one who has a better understanding of archaeology and archaeologists than most – and thus he discounts the

possibility that archaeology may one day be able to expose detail about this subject for which the textual evidence is minimal.

This thesis shares much in common with David Petts' 2011 book, *Pagan and Christian: Religious Change in Early Medieval Europe* (Petts 2011). Petts has explored the various methods and theoretical backgrounds through which the nature of early medieval paganism, early Christianity and the transition between the two have been studied in the history and archaeology of early medieval Europe (Petts 2011: 13). Petts' study emphasizes the contested and problematic nature of not only the textual evidence for the religious practice, but also the inherent difficulty present in interpreting a class of material culture which we take to symbolize belief, especially burials and funerary items (Petts 2011: 20-1). This is a necessarily selective survey of the current state of scholarship about early medieval religion, but I would argue that it would benefit from a deeper time-depth in its analysis of current ideas on the subject. It is of the utmost importance to realize that these ideas did not originate in a vacuum and in fact are often historically contingent. It is this historical context and temporal dimensionality that this thesis will provide.

The studies discussed above cover primarily the Conversion Period and the early Christian era, but there also exists a smaller body of literature that attempts the same type of analysis for the pagan past. Although summaries of the accumulated scholarship about paganism existed previously (see D. M. Wilson 1992 for example) it has only been in the last few years that there has been any attempt to explore the creation of this knowledge in a self-critical manner. Several recent studies have explored the historically driven construction of pagan identities through the work of antiquarians, historians and archaeologists. These include the work of Adam Stout (2008) and Ronald Hutton on the Druids (2009) and the recent paper by Sue Content and Howard Williams on Anglo-Saxon paganism (2010). Hutton's book, which continues to draw out themes identified by Stuart Piggott (1968), is a nuanced look at the historical processes that produced the Druids, as we are familiar with them today, beginning with the mentions made in the writing of Julius Caesar and continuing through to the modern day² (Hutton 2009: x). In

² Although the Druids, to whatever extent they actually existed in the past, were a prehistoric phenomenon, it was very common (up until at least the mid-nineteenth century) to cast the Conversion as a transition between druidical religion and Christianity. Whether this comes from an elision between the Roman conversion and the Anglo-Saxon one (Hutton 2009: 58-9) or an elision between native British and Anglo-Saxon paganisms is hard to say, but Hutton's work is key to understanding past constructions of pre-Christian identities in Britain and is therefore included here despite

it he shows the myriad ways in which the idea of Druids and a druidical religion have been created and recreated many times in response to social, political, nationalistic and religious pressures in the course of British history; his book is, as he writes, “about neither archaeology nor Druidry, but about the British, and the way in which they have seen themselves, their island, their species and their world” (Hutton 2009: xv). In a previous volume Hutton argued that the Anglo-Saxon pagans were less likely to be the subject of modern fantasies, “partly because of the starker and more gloomy attitude towards nature and the supernatural embodied in Anglo-Saxon literature, the work of a warrior society entering a hostile land filled with crumbling towns and villas” (Hutton 1991: 264).

The history of archaeological conceptualizations of Anglo-Saxon paganism have been recently explored by Sue Content and Howard Williams, who trace the origins of our current perceptions back to the beginnings of funerary archaeology at the end of the eighteenth century (Content and Williams 2010: 187). Content and Williams’ paper, entitled *Pagan Legacies*, goes on to provide a short overview of the development of an archaeological conception of paganism for the Anglo-Saxon period (Content and Williams 2010). They make a tripartite division of the history of the subject, into prehistoric, proto-historic and historic studies (Content and Williams 2010: 181-2), which is a useful device for thinking about both the archaeology of paganism and the history of early medieval archaeology more generally. Ultimately they conclude that the ability to study the pagan past was in some sense limited to the early Victorian period and the first flush of the nineteenth century obsession, and that before and after that period the study of the pagan past has been obscured by a focus on migration and Christianity amongst Anglo-Saxon archaeologists (Content and Williams 2010: 196). Although this paper provides a solid overview and introduction to the subject, the authors focus too much of their attention on the Victorian antiquarians and place unwarranted emphasis on the burial archaeology to the exclusion of other types of material evidence.

Running parallel to the interest in Anglo-Saxon religion since the early medieval period has been an interest in Celtic Christianity. The historiography of Celtic Christianity from AD 664 through to the current day has been studied by Ian Bradley, whose book *Celtic Christianity: Making Myths and Chasing Dreams*, was published in 1999. Bradley explored the “myth-making, legend-building, inventing and re-inventing history for propagandist purposes” (Bradley 1999: ix) that occurred during the long history of the idea of a unique

not being specifically focused on Anglo-Saxon paganism. For a more detailed analysis, see Chapter Four.

form of Celtic Christianity. As a theologian, Bradley admits that this work was painful for him to write because of the “deconstructionist tone” he adopts (Bradley 1999: ix). Nevertheless, his volume provides an excellent overview of the ways in which Celtic Christianity has been used as a religious, political and cultural tool from the seventh century to the end of the twentieth century. There are many similarities between the ways in which Celtic and Anglo-Saxon religion have been used throughout this period, albeit usually for opposing sides of the debate.

It is important to note that recent years have seen an increase in this type of historiographical analysis within Scandinavian archaeology. The 2006 edited volume that was produced as the result of a conference held in Lund, Sweden contained a plethora of papers on the subject of Old Norse religion in long term perspective (Anders Andrén et al. 2006), including Margaret Clunies Ross’ chapter on scholarly conceptions of Old Norse paganism from the middle ages to the present day (Ross 2006). Ross showed the paradox between the conflicting responses of scholars who both saw Old Norse religion as inherently alien and at the same time as the subject of fascination and study (Ross 2006: 412). The time has clearly come for analysis of this pregnant and interesting subject throughout northern Europe, with additional scope for comparative studies between nations.

Together these studies have begun to expose the historically-driven and culturally-constructed nature of our ideas about early medieval religions, what they were and how they changed. None achieves what is undertaken in this thesis, which aims to go far enough into the past to explore the deep roots of these ideas and their origins in the textual histories of the early medieval period. Furthermore, none has adequately addressed the role of contemporary Christianity (usually, but not always, Anglican Christianity specifically) in the creation of archaeological ideas about early medieval religion. Most crucially, the religious influence on the study of the early medieval past (where it has been acknowledged at all) has been seen as something separate from the political and nationalistic implications, rather than simply another facet of the same cultural paradigm. There is a clear gap in our understanding of this subject and it is this gap that this thesis hopes to begin to fill.

Conclusion

The questions that archaeologists and scholars from other disciplines have asked about the Conversion have been some of the most interesting and important in the study of the

early medieval period, but the absence of deep historiographical engagement has meant that scholarship has not reflected on why it has posed certain questions. The archaeology of the conversion period in Britain has been a key locus for the study of the Anglo-Saxon past; text, material culture, religious belief and politics have all come together to create a uniquely fascinating field of study. The stated objectives of this thesis - to explore the relationship of the archaeology of the Conversion to its sociopolitical and religious environment, to think critically about its relationship to the textual evidence and to trace the chains of scholarship created by archaeologists reading their predecessors work – are all part of an attempt to show what a dynamic and historically-driven past this subject has had and what that means for archaeologists working on the subject today. Our ideas about early medieval religion are multi-dimensional and to study the subject without an appreciation for the historical derivation of those ideas leaves us with an artificially one-dimensional view of the subject.

This chapter has situated the following study in the context of the academic climate in which it sits. In part as a result of its complex process of development, the study of the history of archaeology has been multi-vocal and diverse in its approaches. Historiographical analysis has been uneven, and some aspects of archaeology have been studied in more depth than others. The wider academic climate of the end of the twentieth century, which emphasized reflexive and richly contextualized meta-disciplinary historiography, has been slow to reach the field of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, but this chapter has shown that it is a field in which this type of study has the potential to provide crucial insight into the subject. This thesis is a part of a burgeoning movement that seeks a better understanding of how past and present studies of Anglo-Saxon archaeology come together to inform both our questions and our conclusions. It covers only a small part of the whole, but it is useful as a case-study and many of the ideas that we shall see played out on a small scale in the study of the Conversion can be found writ large in the wider history of Anglo-Saxon archaeology.

The fact is that we have been so trapped by the agenda set by historians and so weighed down with the paraphernalia of medieval history that we scarcely feel able to interpret and analyse in the modes of contemporary archaeology. When we do try, we are accused by historians of, at best, irrelevance or lack of scholarship, and at worst of uttering jargonistic claptrap (Austin 1990: 13).

Chapter 2: Medieval Textual Sources

The history of the study of the Anglo-Saxon conversion has been based on a small number of textual sources produced between the seventh and the eleventh centuries. These few sources - rare, fragmentary, and far from unbiased - remained the only category of evidence for this topic until the end of the eighteenth century and they still claim an important place in our understanding of the Conversion to this day. Many are difficult to date and some lack clear provenance. They are all subject to the biases of their authors and, as such, are influenced by the historically situated paradigms they espoused, and the veracity of their historical information is open to debate. Nevertheless, these texts have come to shape our understanding of the Conversion through several centuries of scholarly discussion and commentary by historians, theologians, archaeologists and others for whom they remain key sources. Crucially for this thesis, antiquarians and archaeologists have often highlighted key aspects of these texts that refer to tangible expressions of religious practice, often with the goal of seeking physical confirmation for what is recorded in the written history. The sections of these works that contain descriptive elements that can be tied to a physical place or item are, therefore, the focus of this chapter.

This chapter has two central aims: the first, to distill what information the historical sources offer about the Conversion and the contexts in which their authors constructed their work, and secondly, to establish by what means and when these written sources were available to later scholarship. The focus of this chapter is the written sources revealed by this research, as those accounts which consistently underpinned the debate surrounding the English conversion, chiming with the imagination and curiosity of scholars across several centuries and even into the present moment. The aim of this chapter is not to determine the historical validity of the early medieval claims (see N. Brooks 2000; Yorke 2008), but rather to establish the source material that the antiquarians and archaeologists of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries could have accessed and worked with; to identify what was available (and in what form) to each

successive generation of researchers. In doing so, this chapter provides a framework for the following chapters by exposing the textual foundation for later scholarship. Many of the relevant passages are quoted here in full, to allow this chapter to also serve as a reference point for the following chapters.

The development of critical historiography, and, to a lesser degree, the addition of archaeological evidence to the study of the Anglo-Saxon past, has cast doubt on the historical veracity of these texts, but has not yet diminished the primacy of the written sources in the study of the Conversion. This chapter begins with an analysis of the text most often used in the study of the Conversion, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. This is followed by a consideration of Tacitus' *Germania*, which has been instrumental in informing our understanding of the pagan Anglo-Saxon past, and finally a selection of the other works dating to the Anglo-Saxon period that have been used by scholars of the topic. This is followed by a brief look at the later twelfth-century sources which played a key role in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century studies. In order to understand the influence of each of these texts on the study of this topic, the contexts of their production and use, and their afterlives or biographies are also considered below. Finally, the ways in which they have been accessible (and to whom) are also considered, with particular focus on the changing nature of libraries and library access throughout the period.

Bede's Ecclesiastical History

More than any other written source, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* has profoundly influenced the study of Anglo-Saxon history from the eighth century to the current day. This text has played a crucial role in the work of scholars of the Conversion. Completed in the year AD 731, this book has continued to enjoy a privileged position ever since; used by contemporaries as a missionary tract (Higham 2006: 21) and by researchers as a key source of information about the early Anglo-Saxon period and the Conversion of the English people. The text used here is Colgrave and Mynors' 1969 edition, which updated Charles Plummer's 1896 version and included information provided by newly discovered manuscripts (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: lxxiii). Since its publication, this has become the standard work of translation for students and scholars alike.

Bede's text is overwhelmingly concerned with the Conversion to Christianity, in keeping with what have been viewed as his heavily religiously motivated aims (McClure 1983).

Although Bede was profoundly interested in the subject, he was not even sure of the date of the Augustinian mission prior to the visit of an English priest to Rome to ascertain the correct date, a trip which certainly took place after AD 725 (Hunter Blair 1970: 42). This uncertainty can be seen as part of Bede's justification for writing this text, in order to fill an important gap in the historical knowledge of the time. His text provides the reader with several different narratives of the Conversion that complement rather than contradict each other. These are outlined below in chronological sequence, rather than the order in which Bede presented them in his text.

The earliest story that Bede provides for the conversion of Britain is that of King Lucius. Despite having little or no historical evidence behind it, this is a narrative that has been popular at various times in the history of conversion studies. In this version of events, the British people are converted early by the initiative of their king, who writes to Rome and asks to be converted:

In the year of Our Lord 156 Marcus Antoninus Verus was made emperor together with his brother Aurelius Commodus. He was the fourteenth after Augustus. In their time, while a holy man called Eleutherius was bishop of the church at Rome, Lucius, a king of Britain, sent a letter praying him that he might be made a Christian by a rescript from him. His pious request was quickly granted and the Britons preserved the faith which they had received, inviolate and entire, in peace and quiet, until the time of the Emperor Diocletian (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 25)³

It is generally agreed that this story may have come from a misunderstanding or mistranslation of the original source, the *Liber Pontificalis* (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 25; A. Smith 1979; Thompson 1935: 135). The idea that the native Britons had received Christianity early and preserved it uncorrupted was, however, one which gained traction at various points in the history of Conversion studies (see A. Smith 1979). This passage, therefore, although it comprises only a small part of the entirety of the *Ecclesiastical History*, is important to this study. Particularly during the Reformation, narratives of the Conversion, which, like the story of King Lucius, minimized the role of the Romans in the conversion of England, were very popular. Roman Christianity in Britain is covered only briefly in this text. Borrowing his narrative from Gildas, Bede relates the tale of St Alban and his miraculous rescue from martyrdom (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 29-35). Bede

³ Anno ab incarnatione Domini centesimo quinquagesimo sexto Marcus Antoninus Uerus quartus decimus ab Augusto regnum cum Aurelio Commodo fratre suscepit. Quorum temporibus cum Eleuther uir sanctus pontificatui Romanae ecclesiae praecesset, misit ad eum Lucius Brittaniarum rex epistolam, obsecrans us per euis mandatum Christianus efficeretur; et mox effectum piae postulationis consecutus est, susceptamque fidem Brittani usque in tempora Diocletiani principis inuiolatam intergramque quietam in pace seruabant (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 24).

paints a picture of Roman Christianity as plagued by persecutions and repeated heresies from across the seas (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 35).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of Bede's writing is concerned with the Augustinian Mission. This was the origin of Christianity in Britain that was the most relevant to Bede and his contemporaries. It is from Bede that we learn of the mission to Kent:

In the year of our Lord 582, Maurice, the fifty-fourth from Augustus, became emperor; he ruled for twenty-one years. In the tenth year of his reign, Gregory, a man eminent in learning and affairs was elected pontiff of the apostolic see of Rome; he ruled for thirteen years, six months, and ten days. In the fourteenth year of this emperor and about 150 years after the coming of the Angles to Britain, Gregory, prompted by divine inspiration, sent a servant of God named Augustine and several more God-fearing monks with him to preach the word of God to the English race (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 69)⁴

After turning back once, due to their fears of entering a "barbarous, fierce and unbelieving nation whose language they did not even understand" (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 69), Augustine and his fellow monks are persuaded to complete their mission by a letter from St Gregory.

In a later chapter, Bede describes St Gregory, before he became Pope, seeing some Anglo-Saxon boys on sale as slaves in the market in Rome.

On seeing them he asked, so it is said, from what region of land they had been brought. He was told that they came from the island of Britain, whose inhabitants were like that in appearance. He asked again whether those islanders were Christians or still entangled in the errors of heathenism. He was told they were heathen. Then with a deep-drawn sigh he said 'Alas that the author of evil should have men so bright of face in his grip, and that minds devoid of grace should bear so graceful an outward form.' Again he asked for the name of the race. He was told that they were *Angli*. 'Good', he said, 'they have the face of angels, and such men should be fellow-heirs of the angels in heaven'. 'What is the name', he asked, 'of the kingdom from which they have been brought?' He was told that the men of the kingdom were called *Deiri*. 'Deiri', he replied, '*De ira!* good! snatched from the wrath of Christ and called to his mercy. And what is the name of the king of the land?' He was told that it was Ælle; and playing on

⁴ Siquidem anno ab incarnatione Domini DLXXXII Mauricius ab Augusto quinquagesimus quartus imperium suscipiens XX et uno annis tenuit. Cuius anno regni decimo Gregorius, uir doctrina et actione praecipuus, pontificatum Romanae et apostolicae sedis sortitus rexit annos XIII menses VI et dies X. Qui diuino admonitus instinctu anno XIII eiusdem principis, aduentus uero Anglorum in Brittaniā anno circiter CL, misit seruum Dei Augustinum et alios plures cum eo monachos timentes Dominum praedicare uerbum Dei genti Anglorum (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 68)

the name, he said 'Alleluia! the praise of God the creator must be sung in those parts' (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 133-5)⁵

This story, with its word play and simple narrative, is repeated many times in the literature relating to the Anglo-Saxon Conversion. The same story is found, apparently independently, in the anonymous *Life of Gregory the Great* from Whitby, written around the end of the seventh century (Colgrave 1968: 91) suggesting that it must have been firmly ensconced in the historical consciousness of the time. As we shall see in the following chapters, it captured the imagination of many scholars of the Conversion in subsequent centuries, where it can be found transcribed verbatim into many histories of the Anglo-Saxon period.

Another section of Bede's text which has often been cited by later scholars is the story of the pagan priest Coifi, whose conversion was achieved through the missionary work of Paulinus:

And at once, casting aside his vain superstitions, he asked the king to provide him with arms and a stallion; and mounting it he set out to destroy the idols. Now a high priest of their religion was not allowed to carry arms or to ride except a mare. So, girded with a sword, he took a spear in his hand and mounting the king's stallion he set off to where the idols were. The common people who saw him thought he was mad. But as soon as he approached the shrine, without any hesitation he profaned it by casting the spear which he held into it; and greatly rejoicing in the knowledge of the worship of the true God, he ordered his companions to destroy and set fire to the shrine and all the enclosures. The place where the idols once stood is still shown, not far from York, to the east, over the river Derwent. Today it is called Goodmanham, the place where the high priest, through the inspiration of the true God profaned and destroyed the altars which he himself had consecrated (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 185-7)⁶

⁵ Quos cum aspiceret, interrogauit, ut aiunt, de qua regione uel terra essent adlati; dictumque est quia de Brittania insula, cuius incolae talis essent aspectus. Rursus interrogauit utrum idem insulani Christiani, an pagani adhuc erroribus essent implicati. Dictum est quod essent pagani. At ille, intimo ex corde longa trahens suspiria, 'Heu, pro dolor!' inquit 'quod tam lucidi uultus homines tenebrarum auctor possidet, tantaque gratia frontispicii mentem ab interna gratia uacuum gestat!' Rursus ergo interrogauit, quod esset uocabulum gentis illius. Responsum est quod Angli uocarentur. At ille: 'Bene' inquit; 'nam et angelicam habent faciem, et tales angelorum in caelis decet esse coheredes. Quod habet nomen ipsa prouincia, de qua isti sunt adlati?' Responsum est quia Deiri uocarentur idem prouinciales. At ille 'Bene' inquit 'Deiri, de ira eruti et ad misericordiam Christi uocati. Rex prouinciae illius quomodo appellatur?' Responsum est quod Aelle diceretur. At ille adludens ad nomen ait: 'Alleluia, laudem Dei Creatoris ilis in partibus oportet cantari (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 132-4)

⁶ Statimque, abiecta superstitione uanitatis, rogauit sibi regem arma dare et equum emissarium, quem ascendens ad idola destruenda ueniret. Non enim licuerat pontificem sacrorum uel arma ferre uel praeter in equa equitare. Accinctus ergo gladio accepit lanceum in manu, et ascendens emissarium regis pergebat ad idola. Quod aspiciens uulgus



Figure 5: Goodmanham Church, East Yorkshire (Semple 2010: 28)

This passage has been interpreted by historians to mean that there was an established priesthood within the pagan hierarchy and that there were standing structures of wood that could be identified as temples (see Mayr-Harting 1972: 23). As Richard Morris put it, if it was not true, “we would have to suppose that Bede invented the two taboos simply in order to have Coifi break them” (R. Morris 1989: 58).

The text contains transcriptions of many of the letters Pope Gregory purportedly wrote to the missionaries, often answering their questions and clarifying some point of doctrinal importance. One of these letters, from Gregory to an abbot named Mellitus, has been frequently used as a source for understanding the pagan religious practice of the day. In it, Gregory sends word through Mellitus to Augustine that:

I have decided after long deliberation about the English people, namely that the temples of that race should by no means be destroyed, but only the idols in them. Take holy water and sprinkle it in these shrines, build altars and place relics in them. For if the shrines are well built, it is essential that they should be changed from the worship of devils to the service of the true God. When this people see that their shrines are not destroyed they will be able to banish error from their hearts and be more

aestimabat eum insanire. Nec distulit ille, mox ut adpropinquabat ad fanum, profanare illud, iniecta in eo lancea quam tenebat, multumque gaudis de agnitione veri Dei cultus, iussit sociis destruere ac succendere fanum cum omnibus septus suis. Ostenditur autem locus ille quondam idolorum non longe ab Eburaco ad orientum ultra amnem Deruentionum, et uocatur hodie Godmunddingaham, ubi pontifex ipse inspirante Deo uero polluit ac destruxit eas, quas ipse sacrauerat aras (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 184-6).

ready to come to the places they are familiar with, but now recognizing and worshiping the true God (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 107)⁷

These two passages, which imply the presence of physical pre-Christian shrines in the landscape, have been very important to the archaeological investigation of the pagan past. They have been the impetus behind the search for pagan religious structures in the archaeological record as well as the justification for describing some recovered structures as shrines.

While it is not possible to quote in full every section of the *Ecclesiastical History* that pertains to the Conversion, the sections above cover some of the most important narratives that were passed down by Bede and used throughout the centuries to understand the Conversion. They are the sections of Bede's text that deal with the material world and consequently those that have been singled out for archaeological confirmation by antiquarians and archaeologists. Archaeologists have relied less frequently on the other parts of the text that pertain to the Conversion but offer less scope for tangible, physical confirmation, such as Ethelbert's outdoor meeting with the Augustinian mission. The *Ecclesiastical History* is a text that is overwhelmingly interested in the Conversion and so the text as a whole must be seen as the important source, but these excerpts serve here as both examples and as points of reference; they are the sections which are most frequently referred to throughout the thesis. It is the variety of ways in which antiquarians and archaeologists have received, interpreted and materialized these narratives that provides the subject matter for the chapters that follow. The parts of the text highlighted by scholars interested in the material culture of the Conversion differ from those relied upon by historians: the narrative of King Ethelbert's meeting with Augustine, for example, is crucial to the historical narrative but contains no physical component that could be confirmed by excavation.

Scholars have read a number of religious and political motives into Bede's impetus for writing the *Ecclesiastical History*. Our intent in reading Bede has very little to do with his purposes in writing. The medieval historian Nick Higham has asserted that the main acknowledged purpose of Bede's writing was the education of his fellow monks on the

⁷ ...dicite ei quid diu mecum de causa Anglorum cogitans tractauit; uidelicet quia fana idolorum destrui in eadem gente minime debeant, sed ipsa quae in eis sunt idola destruantur, aqua benedicta fiat, in eisdem fanis aspergatur, alteria construantur, reliquiae ponantur. Quia, si fana eadem bene constructa sunt, necesse est ut a culta daemonum in obsequio ueri Dei debeant commutari, ut dum gens ipsa eadem fana sua non uidet destrui, de corde errorem deponat, et Deum uerum cognoscens ac adorans, ad loca quae consuieuit familiariter concurrat (Colgrave and Mynors 1969:106).

relationship between man and God, and he would probably be surprised at the uses the *Ecclesiastical History* has been put to over the centuries since its completion (Higham 2006: 45). Higham has pointed out that scholars combing through Bede's text for historical truth have often filtered out the religious aspects, or what he sees as "the presence of a muscular and active Christian God, deeply involved in the affairs of man in general and Englishman in particular" (Higham 2006: 148). In other words, Higham argued, what we use as an historical or ethnographic text is in fact in part a religious one, and therefore we must be conscious of the original intentions of this work.

The noted translator and scholar of Bede's works, Calvin B. Kendall has recently argued that Bede's intention was "to construct a model for conversion from top down that would be sensitive to political necessities, social realities, and the varieties of individual experience, but that at the same time would mirror the profound transformation that, in his view, ought to accompany spiritual re-orientation" (Kendall 2009: 137). In Kendall's view, Bede put forth the story of the conversion of the Northumbrian King Edwin as a counter-point to the dominant Constantinian conversion narrative, a story that Bede himself may have felt somewhat ambivalent towards (Kendall 2009: 138-9). In doing so he provided his immediate audience, the Northumbrian monks of Wearmouth-Jarrow, with a more personal origin story for their faith that located it within their own region.

As well as having overtly pedagogical and religious aims, the *Ecclesiastical History* can be seen as having a strong political motivation. Much has been made of Bede's emphasis on the Roman missionary connection and his almost complete lack of interest in the Irish missionary action that was taking place at the same time (see Thacker 1996 for a summary of the debate). Bede's connection to Rome, and the importance to him of expressing his admiration of, and gratitude to, the Roman missionaries, is hardly surprising, given the political advantage to be gained from claiming that ones religion came directly from the Pope, as in the story of Gregory and the slave boys. Anton Scharer has explored the tradition of privileging Gregory's role in the Conversion above Augustine's, despite the latter's more active missionary work, attributing this to the cultic nature of Gregory's persona (Scharer 1999). It is in part this emphasis on the Gregorian tradition that allowed Bede and others to conceptualize the inhabitants of England as one people, the *Angli* or *Angelcynn*, rather than the more chaotic political reality of the time (Scharer 1999: 196).

Perhaps more importantly, however, Bede's text can be seen as emphasizing the legitimacy and power of the Northumbrian and Deiran King Edwin, by establishing his

royal line as having played a key role in bringing Christianity to the Anglo-Saxons. Whilst presenting a uniquely unified view of England as a whole (rather than as various regions and groups) Bede emphasized the importance of his own homeland and local royal dynasty in the story of the Conversion (G. H. Brown 2009: 101). The text gives no space to the Mercian story, a fact which reflects Bede's position as a Bernician and the history of conflict between those groups (Higham 1995: 10). The tone of propagandizing and royal pandering found in Bede's writing has not only been used to explain its contemporary popularity, but also can be seen as a key motivation for its original composition.

Other scholars have seen Bede's writings as aspirational, betraying a desire to become the latest in a classical tradition of historical writing which includes the Latin Fathers of the church (McClure 1983: 78; Ray 2006: 29). Amongst Bede's large output of scholarly works are texts such as *De natura rerum* or *On the Nature of Things*, which was based on a well established classical model (Kendall and Wallis 2010: 1-2), which suggests that he was aware of his work in relation to the classical tradition of writing. If this was his aim, he appears to have been successful, as can be seen from the place of his works in the canon of historical texts. Some of the early printed copies of the *Ecclesiastical History*, from 1583 and 1587, can be found bound together with the writings of the Latin Fathers (Frantzen 2010: 238).

Bede's motives for writing the *Ecclesiastical History* may be lost to history, but we are better able to understand his use of the available sources and his biography. Scholars have attempted to identify the corpus of sources available to Bede in writing his history and what the contents of his library might have been. He was not known to have traveled widely, although he is recorded as having visited York and Lindisfarne (Ward 1990: 6). Several authors have attempted to catalogue the references to the books he must have had access to, either in the library of the monastery at Wearmouth-Jarrow or through some other means (see Laistner 1935 for example). The most recent and comprehensive of these (Lapidge 2006) lists some 108 authors and a handful of anonymous works which can be found referenced in the works of Bede, along with copies of many original letters between the key players in the history. It is his access to sources such as Gregory's letters that, for many, elevates his work to the level of history and separates it from other early medieval texts (Colgrave 1968: 53).

Much has been written about Bede the man, but the most reliable source for information about his life remains his own autobiographical section in the *Ecclesiastical History*. In this

section he gives details of his life in the twinned monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, stating:

I was born in the territory of this monastery. When I was seven years of age I was, by the care of my kinsmen, put into the charge of the reverend Abbott Benedict and then of Ceolfrith, to be educated. From then on I have spent all my life in this monastery...At the age of nineteen I was ordained deacon and at the age of thirty, priest (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 567)⁸

Another contemporary source on which we rely for our understanding of Bede's life is the letter written by Cuthbert, later Abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow, to Cuthwin, which describes Bede at the time of his death (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 580-7). This letter portrays Bede praying, teaching and writing up to the hour of his death, as well as distributing his few valuable possessions ("some pepper, and napkins, and some incense")⁹ amongst his fellow monks (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 585).

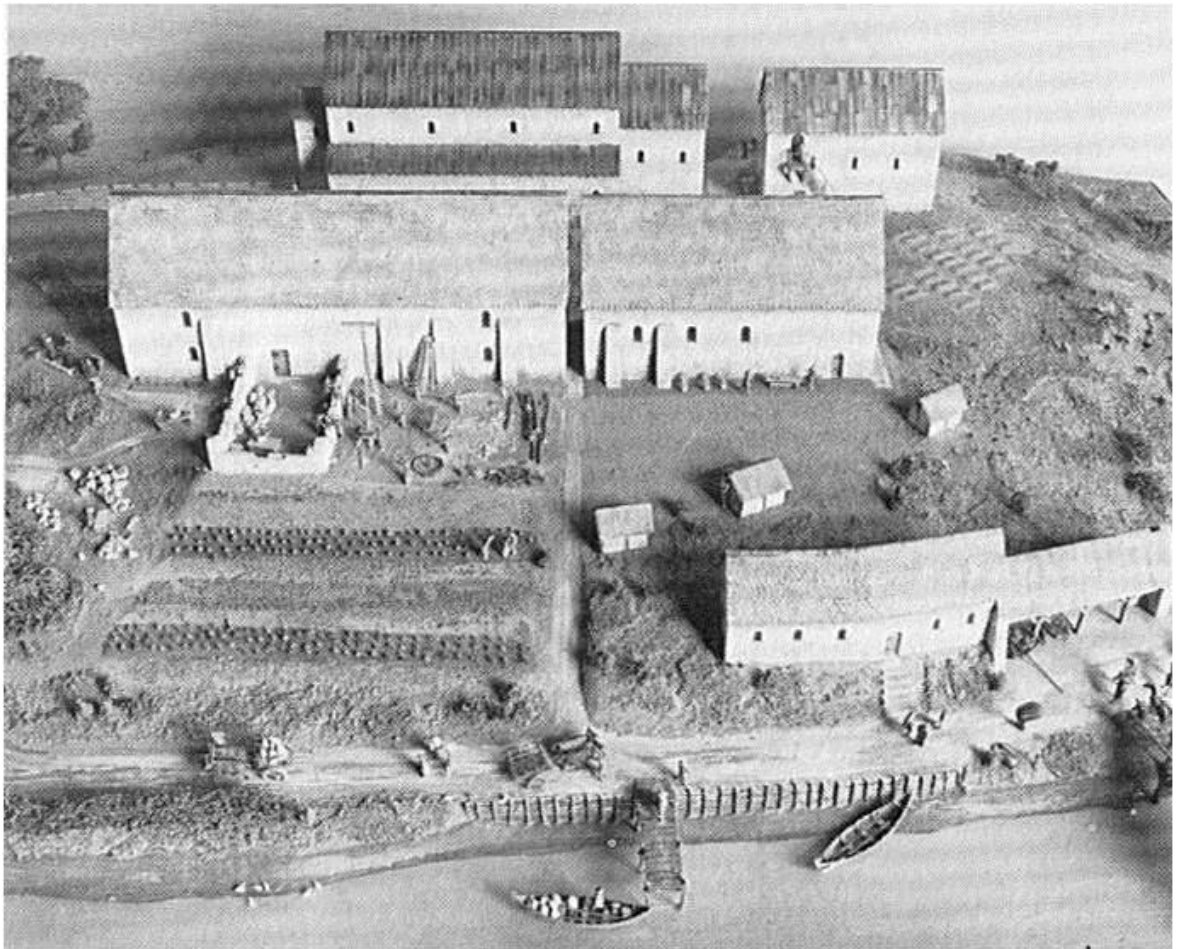


Figure 6: A reconstruction of the monastery at St Paul's, Jarrow (Cramp 2005: 25)

⁸ Qui natus in territorio eiusdem monasterii, cum essem annorum vii, cura propinquorum datus sum educandus reurentissimo abbati Benedicto, ac deindi Ceolfrido, cunctumque ex eo tempus uitae in eiusdem monasterii habitatione peragens ... Nonno decimo autem uitae meae anno diaconatum, tricesimo gradum presbyteratus (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 566)

⁹ id est piperum, oraria et incensa (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 584)

These are the only two contemporary sources for the biography of Bede; however, since that time many hagiographical and historical studies have been conducted. After Cuthbert's letter, there are no other biographical texts extant until the late eleventh century, when a *Life* was copied into a manuscript of the *Ecclesiastical History* (Rollason 2010: 195). Although he was likely never formally canonized as a saint, the treatment of his life's history and relics show that there has been a certain amount of informal cult activity surrounding him since his death (Rollason 2010). Bede the man has been reinvented in different guises for a number of purposes in the years since his death, and the various re-readings of his biography are part of the way in which he is used in the study of the Anglo-Saxon period.

The Afterlife of Bede's Text

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* was in high demand as soon as it was written, at first primarily desired by missionaries on the Continent, who saw it as a tool of conversion (Higham 2006; Parkes 1982). We know that this text was important during the medieval period not only because of the number of medieval manuscripts still extant, but also from orders for copies of the text, dated as early as AD 746-7 (Parkes 1982: 15). Boniface, the archbishop of Mainz, wrote both to the archbishop of York and the Abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow to order copies of the text only a decade after the death of Bede himself, demonstrating how far his reputation had spread (Parkes 1982: 15). The pressure to create manuscript copies fell originally to the monks of Wearmouth-Jarrow, but it was not long before copies were being made in scriptoria on the Continent. For Anglo-Saxon missionaries on the Continent, "it laid out a virtuous tradition of monastic and eremitic endeavour stretching right back to Gregory the Great, via a host of exemplary figures, both English and other, whose deeds they could emulate and against whom they could measure themselves" (Higham 2006: 21). The *Ecclesiastical History* was not the only one of Bede's works to be in such demand in the early medieval period, as "... by the mid ninth century his textbooks and biblical writings were *libri catholici*, books necessary for the reading of the Bible anywhere, like those of the other *patres*" (Ray 2006: 34).

In their index of manuscripts for the *Ecclesiastical History*, Colgrave and Mynors list 166 extant manuscripts, the early examples of which are divided into a 'c' group and an 'm' group, with a few small distinctions between them (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: xli). That so many survive to this day in many different parts of Europe implies that many others were originally produced which have not survived. Many of the manuscripts of Bede's writings that were held in English libraries after the ninth century were, in fact,

Carolingian reintroductions of the text from the Continent, following the disruption of the Viking period which led to the destruction or neglect of the manuscripts (Westgard 2010: 201-2). The first printed edition was created some time between 1475 and 1480, probably in Strasbourg, and bound together with Rufinus's Latin translation of Eusebius (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: lxx). As can be seen below, the *Ecclesiastical History* was included in many libraries throughout the medieval and post-medieval period, in manuscript and printed format.

The Old English version of the *Ecclesiastical History* has a history of its own. Four full Old English manuscripts and a single fragmentary copy are extant (G. F. Browne 1920). The Old English version has a mythological past that provides it with an important place in history. It has been argued that King Alfred himself translated the text into English, along with five other Latin texts (G. F. Browne 1920). While this story is now considered not to have any factual basis, it has held the imagination of many throughout the centuries. It was first refuted by Thomas Miller in 1890, who argued that, based on the linguistic evidence, the translation should more properly be attributed to a Mercian monastery (Miller 1890-98: lviii). While this mythological past is no longer given credence, it has been an important aspect of how and why this text has been so important throughout the centuries. King Alfred's importance as a heroic figure and reputation as a Christian king who fought off the pagan Viking hoards have lent "his" version of the text a certain position in the historical imagination of the scholars of the Conversion.

Abraham Wheelock, a professor of Arabic and Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge, published a side-by-side Latin and Old English text in 1643 (Murphy 1967: 47), which became the standard text for half a century. Wheelock's side-by-side edition was the standard translation until it was superseded by John Smith's 1703 edition of the Moore manuscript from the Cambridge Library collection (McKitterick 1986: 137). This, in turn, was replaced by the 1896 edition by Plummer, which was the standard text for the first half of the twentieth century, before itself being replaced by Colgrave and Mynors at the end of the 1960s. These successive editions have refined the translation and allowed for the multiple manuscript versions to be collated. New editions are printed regularly, but Colgrave and Mynors' edition remains the most authoritative and is still in use today.

Although several of Bede's other texts were considered equally important until at least the twelfth century (Kendall and Wallis 2010: 37), the *Ecclesiastical History* is the only one of his many written works to continue to play such a key role in modern scholarship. It has achieved such a preeminent position in the canon of historical sources that there is no

possible study of the Conversion that does not address or take into account Bede's narrative in some way. Explored below are a number of other sources that have been used to supplement or support Bede's version of the events, but none of them have reached the same position of hegemonic narrative that the *Ecclesiastical History* has long held. As we have seen above, Bede's motivations and inspirations have been explored by many authors from a variety of different paradigms and the veracity of his text has been questioned, but his essential ability to explain the Anglo-Saxon Conversion has never been challenged.

Paganism in the Written Record

Reading Bede's text provides us with a narrative of Conversion, which, although it is certainly biased and incomplete, is at least comprehensible. Bede's representation of paganism, however, is not adequate on its own. Scholars have had to look to other texts for an understanding of the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon past. Our understandings of the Anglo-Saxon pagan past come from a much less direct and less well-known source, Tacitus' *Germania*. Written in the year AD 98 as an ethnographic work about the various Germanic tribes, this work includes a short paragraph which contains a description of their religious practice:

In keeping with the greatness of their divinities, they think it proper neither to confine their god within walls nor to give them any likeness of human appearance; they consecrate groves and glades and call by the names of gods the intangible quality they see with the eye of reverence alone (Benario 1999: 23)¹⁰

This paragraph, short as it is, has stood almost alone as an ancient textual source for the religious practice of the pre-Christian Teutonic populations. Many have questioned the validity of transferring a passage written about the Germanic tribes of the Continent (by a Roman citizen who may never have been to the areas he was describing (Benario 1999)) in the first century AD, to the early medieval inhabitants of England but, especially for early scholars, it remained the only source for information on the subject. Tacitus' *Germania* was also a crucial text for the history and archaeology in Germany beginning at the Reformation (B. Arnold 2006: 14). The transference of Tacitus' description to the Anglo-Saxon population must be seen as a key expression of the Teutonism that was present in antiquarian and archaeological circles until the middle of the twentieth

¹⁰ ceterum nec cohibere parietibus deos neque in ullam humani oris speciem adsimulare ex magnitudine caelestium arbitrantur; lucos ac nemora consecrant, deorumque nominibus appellunt secretum illud quod sola reverential vident (Benario 1999: 22)

century: whilst the English were conceived of as wholly Germanic, it was considered appropriate to assign both the Anglo-Saxons and the early Germanic tribes a shared past.

Born around AD 55, Tacitus was a Roman senator who had previously held a number of more minor offices within the empire (Benario 1975). Although little is known of the personal details of his life, he left behind a large body of work, which includes *Agricola* and the *Annals*, books which were well-known and important in their own day and remain so to this day. Although he was well educated and well traveled, there is no evidence that he actually visited the areas he describes in the *Germania* (Benario 1999). The *Germania*, considered one of his minor works, was written against a background of political upheaval, and Tacitus' decision to write about these specific groups can be seen as a reaction to this environment. After a long history of conflict, Emperor Domitian was waging war against several of the German tribes in the 80s, and he had established an armed line of defensive structures to protect the Roman territory beyond the natural borders of the Rhine and the Danube (Benario 1999: 5-6). In this context, it is possible to understand the value of an ethnographic work of this type to a political audience.

It is unclear when this text became central to the study of the Anglo-Saxons. As can be seen below in Chapter Three, this way of using the text was already firmly established by the sixteenth century. It is not only the religious practices described in the *Germania* which are borrowed to explain Anglo-Saxon culture, but also the descriptions of assembly and political organization, which have been often used to suggest how the early Anglo-Saxon systems of government may have evolved. We can never know for certain how appropriate this transposition was, but Tacitus' description of the pagan practice of the Germanic tribes is often cited even in the current day. The potential problems with the strategy of using this text in this way are numerous, but the pertinent question for this thesis is not whether or not past scholars were right to adapt this text to their needs, but what that tells us about our received notions of paganism and the development of scholarship.

Although important in Rome when it was first published, the *Germania*, unlike Bede, was not known in the early medieval period. A manuscript existed in the ninth century in the library of Fulda in Messen-Nassau in Germany (Warmington 1970: ix), but this appears not to have been copied or disseminated. It was not until a single manuscript was discovered in monastery of Hersfeld in Germany at the height of the fifteenth-century thirst for manuscripts and stolen (Mendell 1957: 242-3) that it became part of the literary canon. This manuscript was thereafter held in the papal library in Rome, where it appears

to have been extensively copied (Warmington 1970) and became increasingly well known.

The first printed editions of *Germania* were produced in the fifteenth century, just before the first printed edition of Bede. The very first was printed in Venice by a man named Vindelin of Spire in around 1470 (Robinson 1935: 327). This same version, based on a manuscript copy from 1466 (Robinson's w manuscript, now in Vienna (Robinson 1935: 89)) was reprinted in Bologna in 1472 and again in Venice in 1476 and 1481 (Robinson 1935). A revised version of this text, bound together with the *Agricola*, was printed in Milan around 1475, with some slight corrections by Franciscus Puteolanus (Robinson 1935: 327-8). A second group of printed editions was put forth by a Fr. Creussner in Nuremberg around 1473, and taken from a now lost manuscript (Robinson 1935: 328). The third early edition to complete the group was printed in or around 1500 in Vienna and combined texts from several manuscript sources (Robinson 1935: 328). This intensive history of printing toward the end of the fifteenth century must have meant that this text was both highly sought after and relatively readily available from the 1470s onward.

Beowulf

Although it was known to exist much earlier, it was not until the 1830s that the text of *Beowulf* became an important addition to the scholarly understanding of the pagan past (P. Wormald 2006: 32). *Beowulf* tells the story of a pagan lord and his retainers fighting a series of monsters, and the text provides a large amount of detail about the world in which it is set. The afterlife of *Beowulf* is unique, as it does not enter the discussion of the Conversion until relatively late in the history of the subject. Although the single remaining manuscript was included in the Cottonian Library and is mentioned as early as 1705 in book catalogues of the time (Chambers 1959: 556), its value as a source for the study of Anglo-Saxon religious practice was not recognized until after J.M. Kemble's 1833 translation. The manuscript was transcribed from the fire damaged original by the Icelandic antiquarian Grimur Thorkelin and printed in 1815 in Copenhagen (Fjalldal 2008). This provided access to the text previously made problematic by the condition of the manuscript, which was by that point fire-damaged, missing leaves and crumbling to the touch. Kemble's important 1833 translation followed soon after, and scholars began to see the potential of this text as a source for pre-Christian religious practice and belief.

Despite its strong Christian overtones (outlined in Orchard 2003), *Beowulf* has frequently been used as evidence for pagan belief and practice, amongst other archaeological uses. Gale Owen-Crocker has suggested that the author of the poem, a Christian, may have had antiquarian or even nostalgic reasons for focusing on the complex and grandiose pagan funerals described in the poem, descriptions which have been heavily relied upon by historians and archaeologists alike (Owen-Crocker 2000: 4-5). When the poem was originally transcribed by Thorkelin (who, like all Icelanders at the time, was a Danish citizen), he considered it to be distinctly Danish, but there has since been much debate about the author, provenance and intended audience (Bjork and Obermeier 1996: 17-8). Establishing a date and exact provenance for the text are tasks which have been described as impossible by Bjork and Obermeier, who have shown that scholars have dated it anywhere between AD 500 and 1000, and have suggested any number of locations for its creation (Bjork and Obermeier 1996: 13-7).

Much ink has been spilled on the subject of who the author of this text was, where he came from and in what context he wrote this poem, but the facts are few and far between. The author has been tentatively identified as a cleric, but may just as well been a some sort of bard or storyteller (Bjork and Obermeier 1996: 31). The original manuscript was written by two different hands, where it was copied by two different scribes, around the year 1000 (John D Niles 1996: 2). Both the context of the original composition and the manuscript duplication are unknown, and we may never know the circumstances of its creation. Several scholars, including recently Richard North (North 2007), have attempted to tie the action of the poem to historically attested individuals, although none have, as yet, been successful. The historical inspirations for the story, like its textual origin, remain a mystery.

An important question about the production of this poem which has concerned scholars since the nineteenth century is the religious identification of the author or authors (Chambers 1959; Swanton 1978). E. G. Stanley noted a pattern in early studies of the text in which “pruning often involves the circular argument, that, once the Christian elements have been excised, the poem will be seen to contain no Christian influence” (Stanley 1975: 41). In other words, the Christian aspects of this poem have often been seen as interpolations or later additions, which can be removed to expose the pagan core of the poem. The current consensus appears to be that the poem is an example of blended or syncretic religious allusions, although probably created in a broadly Christian context (Irving 1996: 186). The author describes the pagan characters thus:

At times they took vows of idol-worship at heathen shrines, prayed aloud that the slayer of souls would render aid against the nation's calamities. Such was their custom, the hope of the heathens; they turned their minds towards hell; they were ignorant of Providence, the Judge of deeds, they knew not the Lord God, nor indeed did they know how to worship the Protector of Heaven, the Ruler of Glory (Swanton 1978)

These mentions of pagan shrines, as in the story of Coifi by Bede, as physical spaces in which or at which events take place, has led to archaeological searches for the remains of pagan shrines and spawned, as we shall see, an archaeology of the pagan past which has trouble reconciling the textual sources to the archaeological remains.

The value of archaeology in elucidating the text of *Beowulf* - and the value of using *Beowulf* to interpret archaeological finds - has been recognized since the nineteenth century, and this symbiosis has been an important aspect of the afterlife of this text. Hilda Ellis Davidson wrote an impassioned defense of the use of archaeology to understand the poem, in which she recommend that the reader consider the archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon halls, textiles, drinking vessels, musical instruments, weapons, jewelry, boats and burial traditions (Davidson 1980). She cast *Beowulf* in light of the finds from the Sutton Hoo boat burial and of the structures discovered by Hope-Taylor at Yeavering (Davidson 1980: 351).

At the same time, while the text is often considered in light of the archaeology, *Beowulf* has also often been used as an interpretive framework for archaeological finds from both Britain and Scandinavia, a trend which has been noted by Catherine Hills (Hills 1996: 293). According to her timeline, the first archaeological use of this text dates back to Charles Roach Smith in 1852 and its importance to archaeology continues to the present day (Hills 1996: 291). Throughout the period between Thorkelin's 1815 transcription and the present day, as we shall see in the chapters that follow, *Beowulf* has been used by scholars from many diverse disciplines to explore many different questions. It has had a special relationship to Anglo-Saxon archaeology throughout its history and that relationship is explored in Chapters Five and Six below.

Other Early Texts

The texts of Bede, Tacitus and *Beowulf* are the most frequently cited sources on the subject of Conversion and early medieval religion, but there are other works that have influenced the study of the subject as well. While it is not possible to be completely comprehensive here (not least because early scholars particularly did not always

acknowledge their sources), the most important of these secondary texts are addressed below. These include the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, important for tracking the dates of the Conversions of particular kings or groups, Gildas' *De Excidio* and an early *Life* of Saint Gregory, written in Whitby in the seventh century.

Gildas' *De Excidio Britonum* or *Ruin of Britain* was an important source for Bede, who took from it much of his material. It is hard to know to what extent antiquarian authors would have used Gildas as a separate source versus using Bede's version of Gildas, but the material has certainly been important to the study of Conversion, no matter how it was accessed. It is from Gildas that we learn of the conversion of Roman Britain during the time of Emperor Tiberius (Winterbottom 1978). The story of St Alban, and his miraculous conversion and martyrdom, is included in this text as well as in Bede, again providing an early narrative of Christianity in Britain:

Alban, for charity's sake, and in imitation even here of Christ, who laid down his life for his sheep, protected a confessor from his persecutors when he was on the point of arrest. Hiding him in his house and then changing clothes with him, he gladly exposed himself to danger and pursuit in the other's habit (Winterbottom 1978: 19)

We do not have an exact date for the writing of this text. While many scholars have placed it in around AD 540, there has been substantial debate on this subject and the date could be several decades earlier (George 2009: 2-4). But by the time Gildas was writing, while there were some Christians in Britain, "a great multitude has been lost, as people rush headlong to hell; and the rest are counted so small a number that, as they lie in her lap, the holy mother church in a sense does not see them though they are the only true sons she has left" (Winterbottom 1978: 28).

At the time of writing his great work, Gildas was about 43 years old, having been born in the kingdom of the Clyde and educated in South Wales (Winterbottom 1978: 3). While this book was very important to Bede and other early writers, its lack of solid historical dates and names has led to it being discounted by most later historians (George 2009). Gildas' text was mostly invective against the kings and remaining clergy of his time, both groups he considered to be extremely corrupt (Winterbottom 1978). If we take the date of approximately AD 540 as true, it would be another half a century before Augustine converted the Anglo-Saxons, so Gildas does not inform us about the Anglo-Saxon Conversion, but he does provide us with a window into the world of pre-conversion Christian Britain.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is made up of several annals, originating in the ninth century and in at least one case, continually updated until the twelfth century. They provide the chronological framework for the history of the early medieval period in England. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle has allowed scholars to date many of the individual conversion events that make up the larger Conversion period. There is clearly an interest throughout this text in recording the different years in which Conversions take place. It describes Columba's Mission to Scotland thus:

565 Here Æthelberht succeeded to the kingdom of Kent and held it 53 years. In his days Gregory sent us baptism, and the mass priest Columba came to the picts, and converted them to the faith of Christ – they are the dwellers among the northern moors – and their king gave him the island which is named Iona, where it is said there are five hides. There that Columba built a monastery, and he was abbot there 32 years and passed away when he was 77 years old (taken from the Winchester Manuscript version in Swanton 2000: 18).

In comparison, the description of the Augustinian Mission from the same manuscript consists of only the line, “595 Here Pope Gregory sent Augustine to Britain with very many monks who preached God's word to the English Nation” (Swanton 2000: 20).

The Chronicle differs from the other texts mentioned here in that the authors do not provide a narrative of Conversion or much commentary. Also unlike the other texts, it discusses the Conversion as the complex series of individual conversion events of kings and regions that it inevitably was. Bede's narrative provides us with the idea of an English people that shared an ecclesiastical past, while the Chronicles record the baptism of individuals and areas which were politically autonomous at the time and only later became unified enough to be called “England”.

As Swanton makes clear, “what is often called simply The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle does not consist of one uniform text, but a number of individual texts which have a similar core, but considerable local variations; each has its own intricate history” (Swanton 2000: xxi). The various versions of the Chronicle are not the work of a single author, nor were they all produced in one place. These impersonal and anonymous tables of events are, particularly in the early period, generally short entries with little commentary on the happenings of the year, but as time goes on, the records become increasingly descriptive (Swanton 2000: xvii). The Chronicles are unique for their time, because no other national history is written in its own language; that the Chronicles are written in English and not Latin makes them unusual for their time and place (Swanton 2000: xx).

The Lives of the Early Saints

Although largely, it seems, ignored by later Protestant scholars, it is perhaps also useful to consider the hagiographical literature about the early English saints, whose roles in the Conversion are elaborated in the tales of their lives. Many of the earliest English saints were born as pagans and so the stories of their personal conversions and martyrdoms can provide information about how the processes of Conversion were perceived. These texts have not been often used in conjunction with archaeological evidence and therefore are not particularly relevant to this discussion, but are interesting nonetheless as they form an important part of the medieval discussion of Conversion.

The Whitby *Life* relates many of the same narratives about Gregory and the Augustinian mission that are included in Bede, but the anonymous writer appears not to have had the same access to the sources that Bede had and therefore much of his account is based on hearsay (Colgrave 1968: 50-4). In Colgrave's view, this early hagiography was replaced in its own time by the production of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, and has never since gained the same type of popularity (Colgrave 1968). It does, however, have the advantage of having been (in theory at least) written during the Conversion rather than afterwards. While the date range is large (AD 680-704), it fits within the Conversion period.

Gregory's role in converting the Anglo-Saxons is emphasized in this text, as well as in Bede, probably because both of these authors were interested in maintaining the link between England and Rome by reinforcing a shared history. The importance of Saint Gregory to Rome meant that claiming a part of him as belonging to the history of Britain was enormously advantageous to these Anglo-Saxon monks. Here, as mentioned above, we find the same story from Bede of the Anglo-Saxon slave boys in the market in Rome, albeit a slightly shorter version (Colgrave 1968: 91). Although there were mentions in the ninth century, the Whitby *Life* was not well known in the medieval period. The first reference after the ninth century doesn't appear until the early eighteenth century and it wasn't printed until 1866, comparatively later than most of the sources for this period (Colgrave 1968). This tends to confirm Colgrave's opinion that this text was replaced by Bede in its own time and has only come back into use recently.

As will become clear throughout the following chapters, the study of the Anglo-Saxon religious past was most often done by Protestant scholars, meaning that many of the more Catholic texts were minimised until the late twentieth century. This is especially

true of the hagiographical literature, which, although potentially vital to the discussion, has only recently been addressed by scholars. An example of the ability of these texts to enlighten archaeological discourse is Felix's *Life of Saint Guthlac*, an early hermit who lived in a tumulus on the island of Crowland in the fens around the turn of the seventh century (Colgrave 1956). This story has interested archaeologists because of the implied reuse of the barrow, and the myth that Guthlac does battle with the demons that were thought to dwell in it, are important examples of the place of pre-Christian monumental burials in the Christian Anglo-Saxon context (Semple 1998: 112-3). Felix, the author of *The Life of Guthlac*, was an East Anglian monk, writing between AD 730 and 740, about events which would probably have happened during his life time (Colgrave 1956: 19). The *Life* was produced for King Ælfwald, king of the East Angles, but it is unclear why he should have commissioned such a work (Colgrave 1956: 15-6). Little else is known about the circumstances of the creation of this text, other than that Felix's Latin and writing style were considered so difficult that his work was ignored for many years by antiquarians (Colgrave 1956: 17). The earliest manuscript copy of Felix's *Life of Saint Guthlac* dates to the late eighth or early ninth century, but there are several other, later medieval manuscript copies which Colgrave divided into four groups (Colgrave 1956: 46). Colgrave also lists several now lost manuscripts which are known from old catalogues. The first printed copy appears to have been a rather late, seventeenth century edition, produced in Venice in the year 1672 (Colgrave 1956: 55). It was not until the 1940s that an English translation of this text was produced by C.W. Jones in the United States and again in Britain in 1956 by Bertram Colgrave. The hagiographies of other Anglo-Saxon saints, such as Cuthbert, Cedd and Wilfrid, have been used in archaeological studies (R. Morris 1989: 115-6), but this category of evidence must be seen as having had only a very minimal influence during the period under consideration in this thesis.

These few early medieval sources have been the starting point and catalyst for a series of studies that attempted to support their assertions by finding tangible, archaeological evidence that could be seen as proof of the validity of the written historical texts. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* has, from the beginning, stood out from the rest as the canonical narrative of the English Conversion. It was Bede's story that was retold by the later medieval historians for a wider audience, and his same text that became a crucial part of English identity at the dawn of the Reformation. Together with the other sources listed above, it went on to define the early medieval history of England to an unprecedented degree for nearly thirteen centuries.

Later Medieval Sources

There are several medieval historical works which are based heavily on Bede and which are concerned with the Anglo-Saxon Conversion. These include the histories of William of Malmesbury (c.1090-c.1142), Henry of Huntingdon (c.1088-c.1157) and Geoffrey of Monmouth (c.1100-c.1155). Why include texts written so long after the events in question? These have, at various times, been important to the study of the Conversion, particularly when used in conjunction with Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. In the early modern period, these later medieval texts were often used as though they were primary sources and were sometimes prioritized over earlier sources if it was convenient to the author. These texts incorporate the existing early medieval sources, but put forth their own, twelfth century interpretation of how the Conversion came about.

William of Malmesbury (c.1090 – c.1142), the foremost historian of the twelfth century asserts that in the year AD 63, twelve disciples of St Philip, led by Joseph of Arimathea, came to Britain to convert the British population by building churches dedicated to Jesus and the Virgin Mary at Yniswitrin or Glastonbury (J. Scott 1981: 45). After a dormant period, when the buildings had become inhabited by animals,

...two very holy men, the preachers Phagan and Deruvian, came to Britain, as the charter of St Patrick and the Deeds of the Britons attest. Proclaiming the word of life, they cleansed the king and his people at the sacred font in 166 AD. Then they traveled through the realm of Britain preaching and baptizing... (J. Scott 1981: 49).

These monks and their disciples rehabilitated the churches at Glastonbury, which were then allegedly visited by many saints and important people throughout their history. Although the history of Glastonbury as regards the Christian past is very central to this story, the only mention of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion comes in a parenthetical observation about estate charters: "...when the English drove out the British they, being pagans, seized the lands that had been granted to churches before finally restoring the stolen lands and many others at the time of their conversion to the faith" (J. Scott 1981: 89). The emphasis on the extended religious past of Glastonbury can be seen, as Scott as described it, as "English churchmen ... striv[ing] to recreate the glories of their past" in the face of the Norman conquest (J. Scott 1981: 5). William of Malmesbury's desire to assert the long-standing past of Glastonbury as a religious centre would later allow this text to be useful to those antiquarian scholars whose interest was in establishing the past of an indigenous British church prior to the Roman (Catholic) mission of Augustine.

William of Malmesbury's *De Antiquitate* does not survive in the original or even in a contemporary manuscript version. The text which has been used by scholars of the Conversion is a mid-thirteenth century version, which is known to contain later interpolations (J. Scott 1981). In fact, the aspects of the text which pertain to King Arthur and Camelot must have been added after William's death as it wasn't until 1190 that the remains of King Arthur were purportedly found at Glastonbury (J. Scott 1981). Several manuscript copies were made following the thirteenth century version, all of which include the more sensational stories from Arthurian legend and also the tale of Joseph of Arimathea (J. Scott 1981: 38). For the purposes of this thesis, the authenticity of the text is unimportant, since the focus here is on how the texts were used and not their historical veracity, but it is interesting in this case to see how the legend of Glastonbury has developed.

The medieval cleric and historian Geoffrey of Monmouth (c.1100-c.1154) also played a crucial role in bringing the fictional character of King Arthur into the discussion of the Conversion in his *De gestis Britonum*. Although he used some material derived from Bede, especially concerning King Lucius, the mythical first Christian king mistakenly included by Bede (Monmouth 2007: 88), he also added an Arthurian aspect to the narrative. The Anglo-Saxon Conversion is described as restoring Christianity to the English, who "blinded by their pagan beliefs, had completely destroyed Christianity in the part of the Island they occupied. It still flourished in the British part, never having wavered since it was introduced in Elutherius' time" (Monmouth 2007: 258). Geoffrey's history was a mythological one, which included King Arthur, bearing a shield on which was painted the Virgin Mary, triumphing over the pagan Anglo-Saxons (Monmouth 2007: 198). Geoffrey of Monmouth's *De gestis Britonum* was so popular in its own time that before the end of twelfth century there were as many as 217 manuscript copies, of which 80 survive (Monmouth 2007: vii-viii). The first printed edition of this text was produced in 1508 in Italy, edited by Ponticus Virunius, followed shortly by a complete edition later that same year in Paris (Monmouth 2007: lxii). Early editions suffered from the large variety of manuscript versions available and it wasn't until 1929 that something approaching a standard text was created by Faral and Griscom (Monmouth 2007: lxiv).

Another medieval version of the narrative was produced by Henry of Huntingdon (c.1088 – c.1157), a twelfth century historian whose *Historia Anglorum* combined an abridgement of Bede's Conversion story with some of the same elements of Arthurian legend that can be found in William of Malmesbury (Huntingdon 1909). Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* exists in only a few manuscripts, but was printed several times beginning with

Sir Henry Savile's collection of various Anglo-Saxon texts in 1596 and again in Frankfurt in 1603 (Huntingdon 1909: xiii). Together, these early Norman texts provided an alternative to the view that focused on the Anglo-Saxon Conversion and provided an indigenous British story of Conversion, which included the dramatic characters of King Lucius and King Arthur. As we shall see in the following chapters, these narratives have often become important at times when it was vital to distance English Christianity from Rome and the Roman Catholic Church.

In the fourteenth century, another medieval version of the Conversion narrative was included in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The *Man of Law's Tale* provides a fictional British back-story for the Anglo-Saxon conversion, by making one of the key players the son of King Alla or Ælla. This mythological origin story for Mauricius comes to Chaucer through Nicolas Trevet, an Anglo-Norman chronicler of the early fourteenth-century (Frankis 2000: 76). In re-creating Mauricius as the Northumbrian-born son of an Anglo-Saxon king, this story roots the Conversion in English soil (Frankis 2000: 80). Unlike later writers who tried to couch the Conversion in British terms to distance themselves from Rome and the Roman Catholic Church, this story makes Ælla's son the emperor of Rome, and thus the impetus behind the missionary actions that brought about the Conversion. Interestingly, despite how widely available Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* seems to have been, Chaucer does not seem to have been aware of it, or the conversion narratives contained in it, opting instead to use the work of the French historian Trevet (Frankis 2000).

In the post-medieval world of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, these texts can be seen as supplementary to Bede's history, which maintained its position of primary importance throughout. However, the use of these texts, which incorporate the Arthurian legend and the past of Glastonbury into the story of the Conversion, have been used at various times to supplant Bede's Augustinian narrative with something earlier and less closely linked to Rome. As the need to exert a non-Roman Catholic past lessened through time, these texts lost much of their value for historians of the Anglo-Saxon period, but it is clear that they have left their mark on many of the early studies that are explored in the following chapters.

Access to the Texts

This section traces the history of access to these pertinent texts. Access varied greatly through time. These texts have been widely reprinted, excerpted and quoted, and it is

impossible to know whether scholars had access to the original texts, or merely used information taken from other secondary sources. This is especially true for the earliest studies, which were produced before bibliographies became commonplace. The aim here is to explore the monastic, university and personal libraries available throughout the medieval, post-medieval and modern periods to demonstrate how - and a sense of to whom - these texts would have been accessible. It is important to note from the outset that Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* appears to have been, with the exception of the Bible, one of the most accessible books in Britain throughout its history. Beyond its early popularity as a missionary text, discussed in the above section, and relatively early first date of printing, it is listed as being present in nearly all extant library catalogues from the medieval period and beyond, and considered to be a core text for all different types of libraries.

Copies of the pertinent texts introduced above, in both manuscript and printed formats, have been included in the libraries of monasteries and religious institutions, of universities and colleges, and of individuals throughout the years. Possession has transferred within and between private and institutional ownership, and the biography of each copy is impossible to trace. Generally speaking, although there were in some cases many copies of a text extant beginning with the advent of printing, the control exercised over these libraries made them difficult (or impossible) to access by members of the public. This section explores the varying access over time and the nature of the collections in which these texts were held.

The complete history of books and the libraries that hold them is far too complex to be included here. There are, however, some important changes that occurred over time to the nature of British libraries which are important to this study. The first of these is the monumental change in the nature of the English library which came about as a direct result of the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the distribution of their assets amongst individuals and secular institutions in the early sixteenth century. A second important transition is the rise of the university and college libraries of Oxford and Cambridge, which is clearly related to the first. Until the sixteenth century, books were primarily located in monastic libraries (F. Wormald 1958); after the dissolution, "only Durham, Worcester, Hereford and Exeter have retained any considerable portion of their medieval libraries in situ" (C. E. Wright 1958a: 164). That this huge transition in the availability of textual sources occurred at the same time that the antiquarian study of the Anglo-Saxon past began is certainly no coincidence. A final important transition explored below is the fundamental change to the way that the country's records were kept following the report

on the fire which damaged the Cottonian Library in 1731. Although this transition took longer than intended by the writers of the report, the public recognition of the need for an organized system of conservation for the written past has had long-lasting impact on the accessibility of historical texts. The history of access to books in Britain is explored below with particular reference to the pertinent texts enumerated above.

Understanding the contents of pre-1066 libraries is challenging due to the lack of the types of sources that are available for the post-Conquest collections, such as catalogues and wills. Using some of the few available book lists from the Anglo-Saxon period, Lapidge has shown that Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* was present, along with his other texts, in a variety of pre-Conquest libraries (Lapidge 2006: Appendix A 133-47). This is interesting, but not surprising given the number of manuscript copies produced and the high demand for this text, explored in the previous section. In fact, however, we have no idea how many copies would have been extant in this period and who would have had access to them.

One of the most crucial limiting factors during the early medieval period would have been the extremely low literacy rate of the lay population during the Anglo-Saxon period. Although it is difficult to tell from the available evidence what the rate of literacy amongst the lay population actually was (Kelly 1990: 36-7), it is clear that reading and writing were primarily, if not exclusively, the preserve of the ecclesiastical community. The process of defining medieval literacy has been shown to be nearly impossible (Clancy 1993: 231-2), but for the purposes of this project, it is sufficient to understand that access to these texts would have been circumscribed by the fact that not everybody could read Latin, and that, whatever we take literacy to be or mean, it was generally confined to the priesthood and the upper echelons of society. Certainly for the early medieval period, most writing was done by, and for, members of ecclesiastical communities (R. Fletcher 1997: 3). The texts that have been passed down to us from the early medieval period, Fletcher has argued, were written "by what might be called professional Christians for a primary audience of professional Christians" (R. Fletcher 1997: 9).

Although it is impossible to be sure about the contents of medieval libraries, we can be relatively certain that Bede, at least, would have been included in most libraries throughout the medieval period. During this period, books were most likely to be found in a monastic library, where they were stored, copied, read and studied primarily by the monastic community (F. Wormald 1958: 20). In analyzing the catalogues of medieval English libraries, R. M. Wilson found that while the works of the English chroniclers

were generally rare, a copy of the *Ecclesiastical History* was present in almost all cases and Geoffrey of Monmouth was also frequently included in the collections (R. M. Wilson 1958: 100). It is impossible to overstate the drastic changes brought about to the English libraries by the dissolution of the monasteries between 1536 and 1539. C.E. Wright called it “the great dividing line” and stated that it meant “the immediate dispersal of the library contents of all the monasteries with exception of the cathedral priories” (C. E. Wright 1958a: 149). The effects of Henry VIII’s reign (1509 – 1547), however, were not limited to the destruction of the monastic libraries. The king’s commitment to the new learning and his reform of the universities also caused the loss of many books considered old-fashioned (C. E. Wright 1958a: 164-65).

In the universities, the colleges generally restricted use of their collections to fellows of the individual colleges, providing each with a key (Gaskell 1980: 4). In 1653, Cambridge University Library restricted their collections by allowing “no-one of lower degree than Master of Arts or Bachelor of Law or Physic” (Oates 1986: 296). Undergraduates were therefore allowed access to neither college nor university libraries, an unimaginable situation in today’s world of 24-hour library access and online resources. It would not be until the late nineteenth century that undergraduates would be allowed access to the books contained in the Cambridge University Library and even then an effort was made to provide more of the necessary texts in the individual colleges than in the University Library (McKitterick 1986: 12-3). Tellingly, perhaps, for the time, Oxford’s Bodleian library was founded by Sir Thomas Bodley in 1598 in part as a way to emphasize the work of Protestant writers against the Catholics (Philip 1983: 2-3). This library similarly catered to the needs of graduates only until the nineteenth century when changes in undergraduate teaching necessitated their admission to the library (Craster 1952: 144-5). In the cases of both universities this was met with some resistance, but the large-scale shifts of the nineteenth century in pedagogy and research eventually led to university libraries as we know them today.

An important personal library was that of Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), the well known diarist and book collector, which contains to this day two printed copies of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, one copy in Latin and one of the Stapleton translation from 1565 (N. A. Smith et al. 1978: 13). The terms of the bequest under which he left his library to Magdalene College, Cambridge mean that this library of some 3,000 volumes has been essentially frozen in time and it provides us with a window into the books that were available to the collector at the end of the seventeenth century. This library, which he created throughout his lifetime, also contained a copy of Tacitus’ *Annals* and *Germania*, of

the 1604 version printed in London (N. A. Smith et al. 1978: 173), as well as a copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth (N. A. Smith et al. 1978: 75). Pepys' library was unique in its breadth and is also unusual in that Pepys did not focus on acquiring beautiful manuscripts, but rather on utilitarian printed volumes.

By far the most important personal library of the time was the great Cottonian library, the collection of Sir Robert Cotton (1571-1631). Not only did this library contain Greek and Latin manuscripts, it was also home to the largest collection of Anglo-Saxon books and manuscripts at the time, as well as books from the post-Conquest and the later medieval periods (C. E. Wright 1958b: 193). Included in this library were manuscripts of almost all versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and two of the oldest surviving manuscripts of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* (T. Smith 1696 (1984)). While this was not a lending library in the modern sense, friends and colleagues were loaned books from the collection, and we can see from the records that this included the texts relevant to this thesis. The loan lists include items such as "Bedae Historia latine literis Saxonice bound with my armes and clasps in Foll. Mr Dr Ward of Sidney Colledg" and "Bedae Historia et Chronicon Saxonice. bound in lether and clasps Mr Lyll of Cambridge (Tite 2003: 33). The Cottonian library was also the location of the Beowulf manuscript and the place where it was originally transcribed by the Icelandic scholar, Grímur Thorkelin in 1815 (Chambers 1959: 557).

The relatively early first printing dates of the key texts for the study of Anglo-Saxon history, as described in the previous section, must have had an impact on their accessibility to a wider audience. The influence of the printing press on the history of the written word is well known and has been much discussed, and is outside of the scope of this chapter. It is important, however, to note the influence that this new technology had over which texts were available in libraries. By the year 1600, the catalogue of the library of Trinity College, Cambridge shows that it contained no manuscripts, only printed books (Gaskell 1980: 79). This was a monumental shift in the content and purpose of libraries.

The fire in the Cottonian library in 1731 was the catalyst for change not only in the future of the collection, but also in the way that records and historical documents were archived and used. A report on the incident, presented to the House of Commons in the following year, provided not only an assessment of the damage to the library, but also an analysis of where and how other collections were being held (1732: 4). The fact that the Cottonian collection had been so severely damaged seemed to act as a general reminder

of the mortality of historical documents and the report goes on to lament the generally poor condition of the country's records (Anonymous 1732: 6). The writers of the report recommended sweeping changes to the manner of record keeping in Britain, including "the purchase of such abstracts and indexes of the publick records, as are the property of private persons, and by restoring those, which belong to the publick and remain in private hands, to their respective offices" (1732: 7).

The Cottonian library eventually formed an important part of the original British Museum when it was created by the Museums Act of 1753 (Cherry 1994: 198), along with many other collections of books and artefacts. These two important events in the history of one man's private collection can be seen to exemplify the eighteenth century transition toward a more publicly accessible history in Britain. The books accumulated by Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), the physician and collector whose will established the museum, and the remaining texts from the Cottonian Library were part of a much larger selection of items which eventually became the collection of the British Museum, including " ...books, drawings, manuscripts, prints, medals, and coins, ancient and modern antiquities, seals, cameas [sic], and intaglios, precious stones, agates, jaspers, vessels of agate and jasper, crystals, mathematical instruments, drawings, and pictures and all other things..." (1753: 7). The establishment of this important repository at this time was partly due to Sloane's will, but also partly a reaction to the fact that the recommendations of the committee made in 1732 had not been followed to an adequate degree. This new act attempted to atone for some of the neglect that followed the report, in providing a permanent home for the Cottonian collection and the items which had been added to it since the fire (1753: 17-25). The books originally housed in the British Museum were removed in 1973 to the new British Library, meaning that the texts originally collected by Cotton, Sloane and others eventually formed the backbone of the publicly available text of British history (P. R. Harris 1998). It was the early reforms in the keeping of national records brought about by the reaction to the fire in the Cottonian library which paved the way for the current incarnation of the British Library, a fully accessible and publicly available collection of all of the nation's written records.

While it is valuable to consider generally the trajectory of increasing access to books in Britain since the early medieval period, the importance here lies in the accessibility of the key texts for the study of the Conversion. I have attempted to show not just the ebbs and flows of textual access generally, but also where, when and to whom these texts were available. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* is important in the history of this subject for many reasons, one of which is the fact that it has remained one of the most accessible books in

the country throughout its entire history. Time and time again it is mentioned in the catalogues of libraries from the pre-Conquest period to the origin of the modern library. I suggest that the fact that it is so readily available gives it a prominent place, but that it is also so commonly found because it has always held such an important place in the history of this period. This is, in a sense, a self-fulfilling relationship between the book and its reputation in which the popularity of the text required it to be accessible, and its accessibility made it popular.

Conclusion

The influence of the texts described above, not only on the study of Conversion, but also on the wider world of theological and historical studies, can be seen throughout the centuries since they were written. It is on these books that all of our various understandings of the Conversion rely. While the chapters that follow expose the effects that this influence has had on the interpretation of archaeological remains and historical questions, it is important also to acknowledge the wider impact that these works have had. Antiquarians and archaeologists have primarily examined the anecdotes and personal stories for ethnographic detail, as well as those aspects of these texts which contain details of landscape, structures and objects, whilst other disciplines have approached them with different research questions and priorities. Historians frequently highlight different aspects of these texts in line with their research questions.

Throughout this thesis, it is argued that this canon of textual sources determined both the questions that could be asked about the Conversion and the range of possible answers that could be given. By establishing these sources here, and by exploring what they say about the Conversion, it is hoped that the scholarly landscape at the end of the medieval period has been established and an understanding has been provided of the toolbox available to the early post-medieval antiquarian or historian. The following chapters expose the ways in which these texts have been used, abused and relied upon to provide data and interpretation for scholars interested in the Conversion from the early sixteenth century through to the current day. The choices they made about which texts to use and which to ignore, and how to present the texts they selected, have determined the shape of the discipline since the medieval period.

This Church story is lame and incoherent, yet 'tis all I would find worth notice, amongst the many volumes of the ancient monks, they being nothing almost but vast heaps of legends, tales, and vulgar reports which passed for current in those ignorant and credulous times; nor is there any methodological or authentick story to be expected for some, and those not a few years yet to come; yet out of these clouds of darkness, out of these voluminous, idle, vain, inconsistent discourses, a man may pick out matter for strange admiration... (Brady 1685: 109).

Chapter 3: Early Modern Approaches 1500-1750

The intellectual and cultural historian Daniel R. Woolf has argued that, in the early modern period, antiquarianism must be seen as an integral part of a larger set of cultural assumptions surrounding the importance of the past (Woolf 2001: 123). He demonstrated that, between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries, the population of Britain as a whole held a series of interconnected beliefs about history and antiquity, the most fundamental of which was the idea that “old was better than new; that the older something was the better it was; and that the authority or legitimacy of a belief, practice or institution, even of an individual, increased in proportion to its longevity and antiquity” (Woolf 2001: 123). As we shall see below, the Anglo-Saxon past was imbued with an unprecedented amount of authority over the lives of contemporary English people during the early modern period, on whose behalf the historical sources were consulted as guidelines for political and religious activity. It was this pervasive cultural attitude of trust in the infallibility of history during this period that created a prescriptive relationship between the past and the present that has never since been equaled.

Following the end of the medieval period, there was a rapid increase in interest in the history of England, including the study of Anglo-Saxon history. This chapter explores the history of the study of the Conversion during the early modern period, from approximately 1500 to 1750. Sometimes known as the “Long Reformation”, this period saw massive political and religious upheaval in England which lasted for many decades after its origin in the first half of the sixteenth century. History and antiquarianism were not yet being used for political and nationalistic purposes as they were in following centuries, but they were called upon to support various arguments in ecclesiastical debates between Protestants and Catholics (Woolf 1990: 37). The results of this pervasive social and religious change caused repercussions in the study of the Conversion which, as described below, not only changed the way the history of the Conversion was perceived and described, but also saw it become relevant and integral to the political and religious debates of the day.

In the pages that follow, particular attention is paid to the relationship between the social and political climate, and the work that was undertaken on the Conversion in the early modern period. Because Anglo-Saxon material remains were not yet identifiable, the study of the Conversion remained entirely text-based throughout this period. The first person to recognize Anglo-Saxon remains for what they were was the Reverend James Douglas in 1793 (J. Douglas 1793), but the textual history of the Conversion had been of interest to many of his predecessors. It is of paramount importance to understand the text-based historical past upon which the first archaeological studies were based, as Douglas and those who followed him were not beginning with a clean slate, but rather adding a new form of evidence to a discussion that had been underway for more than 200 years. It is argued here that the debates of the early modern period can be seen to influence the origin and early development of archaeological investigation on the subject. Not only did the political environment influence scholarship during this period, but historical data was also called upon to shore up political arguments. This reciprocal relationship between Conversion scholarship and the wider political context of the day was unique and important to the development of the field as a recognized topic of study in its own right.

This chapter also assesses the ways in which the medieval texts, discussed in Chapter Two, were used and reused throughout the early modern period. This was a time when many of the early medieval texts were being translated, and consequently there was more material available for scholars during this time than at any point previously. It was during the seventeenth century that large-scale philological projects such as George Hickes' (1642-1715) *Linguarum veterum septentrionalium thesaurus grammatico-criticus et archaeologicus* were embarked upon, with the goal of providing translations of key texts, an accessible grammar and an historical view of the development of the English language (Hickes 1705). The translations produced by Hickes and his contemporaries enabled much wider access to the ancient texts. Despite the expanding body of documentary and artefactual sources, antiquarians of this period generally continued to limit their studies to two specific texts, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and Tacitus' *Germania* for their sources of information regarding the Conversion of the English. The use of Tacitus was justified by the historian Robert Brady (c.1627–1700), who wrote, "From these ancient customs of the Germans in general, if I mistake not, may be deduced the grounds and rudiments of the Saxon laws, government and policy afterward in this nation" (Brady 1685: 57).

A third important theme for this chapter is the seeming lack of interest in the material culture of the Anglo-Saxon period and specifically the Conversion. A very few items of Anglo-Saxon provenance were recognized during this period; by the late seventeenth century, the King Alfred Jewel had been discovered and identified by its inscription (Musgrave 1698: 441), but generally objects and monuments from the early medieval period were essentially invisible prior to the latter half of the eighteenth century. This contrasts with the early development of research on the material culture of the Romans (see Hingley 2008 for a full discussion), and to a certain extent, prehistoric monuments (Aubrey's work at Stonehenge, for example (Aubrey 1665-93)). It is suggested in this chapter that this apparent lack of concern may be in part the result of a contemporary sense of the Anglo-Saxon past as something known or fully comprehended, as something that formed a part of the English Christian self. Looking beyond the texts was simply not required. During this period, the 'why' and the 'how' of Conversion were elucidated exclusively through the documentary evidence. It is possible that the early antiquarians neglected the material remains of the Anglo-Saxon past simply because they were unable to recognize them, but surprisingly there were no attempts to identify the material traces of the early medieval population.

The time span included in this chapter is somewhat longer than that covered in subsequent chapters. The beginning of the period under discussion here is defined by the transition between the end of the medieval period and the beginning of the early modern period; a transition that saw significant changes in the way that history was studied and used in English culture. The end of this chapter is defined by a further transition, this time from the exclusively text-based interest in the Conversion, to the analysis of the Conversion by means of texts *and* material culture, with the first excavations of Anglo-Saxon graves by the Reverend Bryan Faussett, who did not recognize the burials as Anglo-Saxon, but nonetheless began to explore the religious affiliation of the individuals he excavated, in the latter half of the eighteenth century. There was considerable variation in approaches and recognition within this period; the importance of the Anglo-Saxon past rose and fell with current events and controversies. It is, however, impossible to consider the transition to the material culture studies which occurred in the latter half of the eighteenth century without first exploring the historical basis that came before it.

Historical Background

In her 1956 history of the Society of Antiquaries, Joan Evans wrote "Archaeology, like fire-weed, grows best on ravaged land. So long as the fabric of medieval England

remained united men were hardly conscious of nostalgia for the past” (J. Evans 1956: 1). Antiquarianism could not have come about at an earlier date; it was a distinctively post-medieval phenomenon. It was a product of the wider European Renaissance and in England, motivated and inspired by the religious politics of the Reformation, the Civil War and the Restoration of the Monarchy. Interest in ecclesiastical history was at its peak during this period and it had an unprecedented ability to influence the actions of contemporary individuals and groups. To understand the work undertaken on the Conversion in this period, it is important first to appreciate that this was an era of extreme upheaval in England, particularly in religious terms. In 1534, Henry VIII had changed the nature of the English Church and its relationship to power by issuing his Act of Supremacy which placed him at the head of the newly independent English Church (Hazlett 2003). Scholars and historians have debated the reasons behind the Reformation and its effects for several hundred years, but for the purposes of this thesis it is important to note that during this period, the English Church was a newly created institution which remained in a transitional era, during which it concentrated on defining its position in society, for many years, and that the relationship between the church and the head of state in this country had changed radically. For many years after King Henry VIII declared himself head of the Church, the conflict between Catholic and Protestant groups in England remained alive, and at times violent. It was against this backdrop of changing and contested religious affiliations that discussion and study of the history of the Anglo-Saxon church became at once relevant and of paramount importance as a legitimizing historical background, to which both Catholics and Protestants staked their claim.

In the seventeenth century, the focus shifted from the religious to the political, with the majority of antiquarian studies into the Anglo-Saxon past being used to support the Parliamentarians in the English Civil War (1641-1651) (P. Hill 2006: 74-75). Marjorie Swann has argued that during the English Civil War, inspired by the atmosphere of political instability, “chorography and antiquarianism were imbued with the grim aura of an increasingly desperate rescue mission, and the antiquarian author became a cultural Noah who gathered and protected endangered specimens on the verge of extinction with the ark of his text” (Swann 2001: 113). Chorographical writing can be seen as virtual collections of the objects and monuments in the landscape (Swann 2001: 98-9). The focus moved away from the study of religion and the Conversion and converged on the political configuration of the ancient Anglo-Saxons, leading to studies of the early medieval tradition of political assembly. Interest in the Conversion did not die out completely, however, and many seventeenth-century studies combined interests in the religious *and* political past of the Anglo-Saxons.

The level of emphasis placed on the Anglo-Saxon past did not remain constant throughout the three centuries encompassed by this chapter. There was less interest in the eighteenth century, compared to the previous two centuries and the Romans and Druids rose instead to prominence. The Anglo-Saxons were seen by many to be barbarous, rude, violent pagans who had damaged the fragile shoots of Roman Christianity before it was able to fully take root (Sweet 2004: 190-1). The key pioneering studies undertaken on British antiquities by William Stukeley and John Aubrey in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, focused primarily on prehistoric remains. Sweet suggests that this was caused by a determined effort on the part of some scholars to separate politics from antiquarian aims (Sweet 2004: 194) thereby arguably separating antiquarianism from one of its most important motivating factors.

Antiquarians and Historians

Until the end of the sixteenth century, English origins were frequently situated in a mythical past, the literal truth of which was hard to defend. The prevailing narrative was drawn from Geoffrey of Monmouth, and ultimately by him from Nennius. It described Brutus the Trojan as the first British king, from whom all of the kings of England descended (Parry 1995: 27-8). It was during the early modern period that this origin myth moved away from a mythical, classically influenced history to focus on Anglo-Saxon origins. The beginnings of the post-medieval study of the Anglo-Saxon past took place in the early sixteenth century and were based on text, specifically the translation of text. Archbishop Matthew Parker (1504-1575) and the royal minister Sir William Cecil (1520-1598) embarked upon a large-scale project of producing, and supporting the production of, textual studies and especially translation of Old English texts (Lutz 2000: 2). In the mid-seventeenth century, the early linguist Abraham Wheelock produced the first side-by-side, Latin and Old English version of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, which allowed unprecedented access to the text in its original language (Murphy 1967: 47). The choice to study the Anglo-Saxon period was a calculated one, and the intended aim of this project was to support the Tudor monarchy and the religious change that this dynasty symbolised. Yet, as the linguist Angelika Lutz has suggested, antiquarian interests had permeated the popular culture to the extent that these early scholars could be confident that their intended audience would understand and be aware of the antiquarian context into which they entered (2000: 3). The original focus of these studies was the linguistic challenge of translating the Anglo-Saxon texts, and that project took priority at first, but

as more people became involved in the study of this period, the research diversified to include broader inquiry into early medieval history.

The seed which was planted during the sixteenth century took firm root in the first years of the seventeenth century when chairs in 'Civil history' and '*Antiquitates Britannicæ et Saxonica*' were established in Oxford and Cambridge respectively (Lutz 2000: 6, 27). Civil history was defined as political history based on the study of the textual sources, contrasted to the on-going study of ecclesiastical history, which was based on the biblical ideas of salvation (Lutz 2000: 29). While the establishment of the chairs was ultimately unsuccessful, the beginnings of the formalised academic study of the Anglo-Saxon past can be seen here (Sweet 2004: 200). Both universities had a vested interest in the history of the Anglo-Saxon past, as both laid claim to have been founded during the Anglo-Saxon period (P. Hill 2006: 81-82). Both Oxford and Cambridge used the early medieval evidence to underpin their competing claims of being older than the other (P. Hill 2006: 82). This was looked upon by some at the time as a frivolous debate; for many it was most important to establish that both predated the founding of any of the universities in France (Inett 1704: 53).

This period saw the rise of many well-known antiquaries, such as John Leland (c. 1503-1552) and William Camden (1551-1623), whose work defined the study of antiquities in Britain. At the beginning of the early modern period, there was no clear dividing line between historical enquiry and what we would today call archaeology (Hunter 1981: 158). The definition of antiquarianism can be dated to this period, however, as Momigliano argued. The idea of the antiquarian as collector and scholar of ancient traditions and artefacts was a defining feature of the humanism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Momigliano 1950: 6). It has been argued that, during this period, with the exception of ecclesiastical history, historical scholarship was not yet as involved in the ideological and political conflicts of the day (Woolf 1990: 35). In other words, the use of history to resolve questions of national identity and other secular political issues was a later development; the only type of conflict that was open to debate on historical grounds was religious conflict. As we shall see throughout this chapter, Woolf's assertion is based on much too narrow a conception of religious history; the impact of the study of ecclesiastical history effected many aspects of the cultural life of the early modern period.

The early modern historian Alexandra Walsham has recently argued that, despite our modern emphasis on the Protestant iconoclasm of the built environment, much of the conflict for control over the religious past was fought out in the landscape (Walsham

2011: 3-4, 14). Walsham argued that, throughout the Long Reformation, the traditional uses of the landscape as a place of pilgrimage and lay worship were dismantled in much the same way as the churches, statues and shrines that were located within that landscape. With the church buildings rededicated to the Anglican Church, lay members of many sects, including Catholics, Quakers and others, began to worship outdoors, whether through necessity or choice (Walsham 2011: 244-5). The pitched battle that was underway over who would define the Christian past was enacted, sometimes violently, on the wells, hills, springs, dales and rocks that had been important to medieval spiritual practice (Walsham 2011: 14). The antiquarian and chorographical texts that have been passed down to us from this period, written by educated, wealthy Protestant scholars often mask the complexity of the discourse that surrounded the traditional myths about these aspects of the landscape (Walsham 2011: 479).

The standard of evidence required during this period was low: it was possible to claim, as the antiquarian Aylett Sammes (1636-1679) did in 1676, that all of the “customs, religions, idols, offices, dignities, of the ancient Britons are all clearly Phoenician, as likewise their instruments of war” (Sammes 1676: unnumbered page). Sammes argued this based on his understanding of the philological connections between English and the language of the ancient Phoenicians, as well as a desire to explain the unexplained antiquities present in Britain. However, most of his etymologies were incorrect, and nowhere in his text does he provide a single example of a Phoenician object as proof of his theory. Sammes’ work is a particularly bad example of the relationship between history and evidence, but the scholarship of many of the antiquarians suffered from the same problem. Nonetheless, the early modern scholars of the past did feel constrained, to some degree, by their commitment to the truth. As Collinson has argued, for the sixteenth century historian, “if the question be one of use or learning, then fictions are ‘more doctrinable,’ for only fiction is free to follow virtue” (Collinson 1997: 39). A common theme during this period was for the antiquarian or historian to bring all of the evidence together, but to leave the judgement of its truthfulness and meaning to the reader (Collinson 1997: 45; Sweet 1997: 52).

This was the era of the collector and of the cabinet of curiosities. Compared to the rest of Europe, the cabinets of curiosities found in Britain were both less organized and less well recorded than their counterparts on the Continent (MacGregor 1985: 147). In amongst the zoological and geological specimens and other items, however, various antiquities could be found in many of these collections (MacGregor 1985: 156). Frequently, young men on their Grand Tour of Continental Europe, a tradition which has its origins in the

mid-sixteenth century (Brennan 2004: 9), would bring back both real and fake antiquities as mementoes (Brennan 2004: 37). It has also been proposed that it is possible to see the chorographical and antiquarian activities of the early modern period as an extension of the business of collecting (Swann 2001: 98). Swann has argued that by writing chorographical and antiquarian texts, early modern historical writers were in effect creating virtual collections in written form (Swann 2001: 98-9). Both manuscripts and artefacts were often included in the collections of the period and the line between the two categories was not always clear. Some written records – especially decorated medieval manuscripts – were treated as objects, whilst some objects were prized for the inscriptions they bore rather than what they were (Swann 2001: 110).

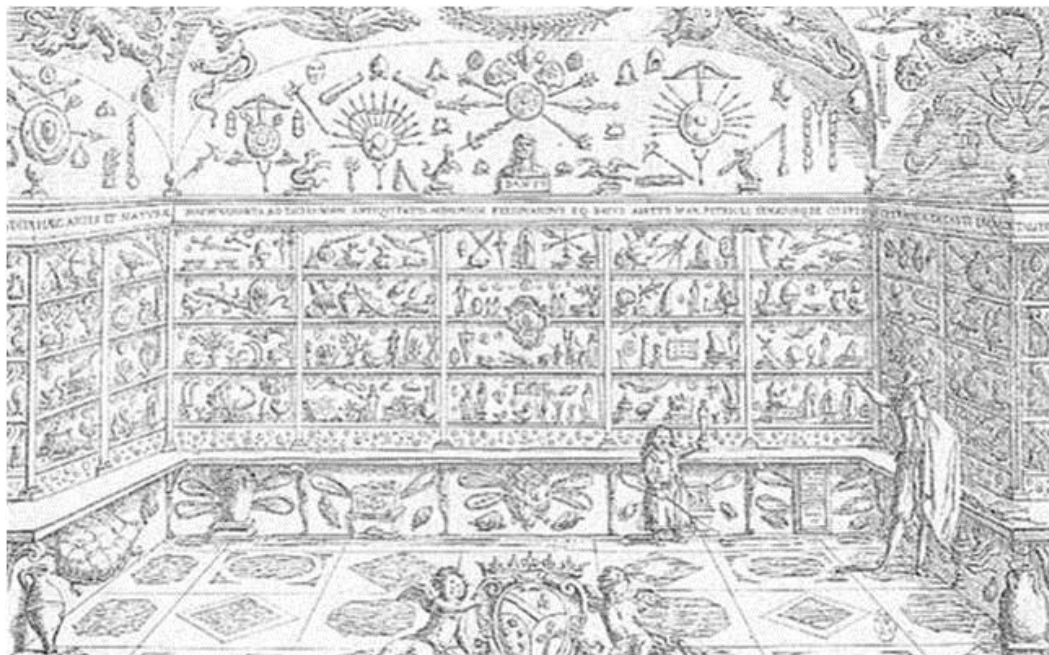


Figure 7: The cabinet of Ferdinando Cospi, 1677 (Schnapp 1993: 171)

Scholarly research concerning the medieval period, and specifically interest in medieval ecclesiastical history, fell dormant between about 1730 and 1800, partly as a result of changing political focus (D. Douglas 1939: 355). The deaths of many of the scholars involved in the study of the medieval past, especially George Hickes, whose translations of Anglo-Saxon texts had been so crucial to the early study of Old English, combined with a new configuration of the church and state which relied less heavily on historical precedent meant that it was no longer an environment in which the subject was highly valued (D. Douglas 1939: 356-7). When, as we shall see below in Chapter Four, the study of this period was again picked up toward the turn of the century, the focus had shifted to the material remains that were so conspicuously missing from the early modern period. The large-scale cultural shifts that had occurred during this period in public and scholarly perceptions of the past and its role in informing the present were however

crucial to the development of an environment in which the research undertaken by antiquarians was valued and appreciated.

The Origin of the Society of Antiquaries

The early eighteenth century saw a florescence of formalized societies throughout Europe, often with the goal of studying the antiquities of the country in which they were founded (Díaz-Andreu 2007: 53-4). This was the case in Britain, where the Society of Antiquaries was established during this period. Although they had been meeting less formally since at least as early as 1585 (J. Evans 1956: 8-9), the members of the Society of Antiquaries began official proceedings in 1707, with the stated aim of illuminating and preserving “all old monumental inscriptions, & other pieces of Antiquite yet remaining” (quoted in MacGregor 2007c: 48). The aims of the original society were strongly biased toward text, at least in so far as they were recorded in the documentation of the first meeting. As well as the above-mentioned focus on inscriptions, the goal of sending members out to the countryside to “inspect the books, writings and other rarities” which were in the possession of individuals who would be unwilling to send them to London (quoted in MacGregor 2007: 48). In practice, however, there were a number of reports to the society on topics we would now consider archaeological, and many illustrations were produced of artefacts discovered by its members.

It has also been argued, on the contrary, that the early development of antiquarianism had little to do with the establishment of societies, but was rather the result of the number of independently wealthy, landed gentlemen who became interested in the very particular, personal history of their own family, estate or region (Peltz and Myrone 1999: 3). Whilst it is possible to over-emphasize the role of societies, the view put forward by Peltz and Myrone negates the importance of a community of like-minded people with whom these individuals could have interacted. David Douglas argued that it was precisely because it was not at all a specialist subject, but rather the focus of a shared common interest, that made medieval scholarship so productive in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (D. Douglas 1939: 17). This is certainly the case for the earliest period, but the Society is important nonetheless for two reasons: first, because the institution of the Society indicates that there was the perceived need for such a group and a large enough number of committed members and second, because the Society would go on to become absolutely crucial for the on-going development of antiquarian, and eventually archaeological, interests in Britain.

Whilst the creation of the Society of Antiquaries was undoubtedly an important aspect of the larger antiquarian context of the time it is impossible to know how much of their scholarship focused on the Anglo-Saxon past until the 1770s and the creation of the Society's journal *Archaeologia*. The subsequent occasional articles on the subject of Anglo-Saxon history were few and far between, which would seem to imply that it was minimal prior to that year. It is important, however, to recognize the implications for the field of antiquarianism generally, especially the legitimization of the field, that was brought about by the King's charter which was granted to the Society in 1751 (Pearce 2007b: 3). Antiquarian research into the Anglo-Saxon past benefited greatly from this new atmosphere of research and publication. Subsequent researchers would come to benefit greatly from the established antiquarian societies and the presence of *Archaeologia* and other journals.

Hunter has argued that the members of the Royal Society (which received its royal charter in 1662) also contributed substantially to the early development of archaeology (Hunter 1995: 187). It was within the Royal Society that the "scientific" study and recording of explicitly non-textual antiquities began in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century (Hunter 1981: 187-8). Contrasted to the emphasis of the early Society of Antiquaries on the texts and inscriptions of the past, the work done by the members of the Royal Society on archaeological subjects was based in the material, measurable world, although Hunter is quick to point out that this does not mean that it was always of a high objective standard (Hunter 1995: 196). Hunter drew too clear a division between historical antiquarianism and what he calls "archaeological antiquarianism", or the scientific study of material remains divorced from their textual context, suggesting that those antiquarians who are most respected by the archaeological establishment of today were those who, at the time, were the most ignorant of the textual sources (Hunter 1981: 158-9). Whilst this is overstating the case to a certain degree (what about all those who were members of both societies?), it is true that the members of the Royal Society contributed greatly to the early development of archaeology, as did the many local societies that were established during this period.

Medieval Texts in the Early Modern Period

As discussed in Chapter Two, many books were destroyed during the Reformation, but a fraction survived and went on to form the basis for many of the studies from this period. Not everyone accepted the veracity of these textual sources, and the Catholic affiliation of their writers occasionally caused doubt. For example, the bishop and antiquary William

Nicolson (1655-1727) encouraged a skeptical attitude toward the sources, writing, “the conversion of our Saxon ancestors happen’d at a time when learning ran very low, and when a general credulity and want of thought gave opportunity to the monks of coining their legendary fables and intruding them upon the world for true and unquestionable history” (Nicolson 1714: 99). Despite this mistrust of the early medieval authors, scholars of the Anglo-Saxon past during this period lacked any alternative types of evidence, so, willingly or unwillingly, they had to rely on the textual sources.

The emphasis of this period was on the translation and transcription of early manuscripts, and on the production of tools such as grammars and thesauruses to understand them. Elizabeth Elstob’s translation of the *Homily on the Birthday of St Gregory* shows not only the linguistic focus of the time, but also the primacy of the story of St Gregory and the Augustinian Mission, as received from Bede. Elstob and her brother William, who had been a pupil of the important linguist George Hickes, created a grammar, in part so that the ancient religious texts could be read (Gretsch 1999: 176). In her introduction to the St Gregory Homily, for which she provided a side-by-side translation, Elstob expressed her support for the characterization of the Anglo-Saxon religious past as the precursor to the new English Church (Hughes 2005: 9-10). She described the faith of the Anglo-Saxons as having “continued in its primitive purity for some ages, the same, after a long night of ignorance and superstition was revived and restored by the Reformation” and wrote “that Faith and Discipline which was first sent to England by St. Gregory, which was first preached to the English Saxons by St. Augustine; the same continued in its primitive purity for some ages, the same after a long Night of Ignorance and Superstition, was revived and restored by the Reformation” (W. Elstob and Elstob 1709: xiii). Many of the scholars who studied this period shared the view that the later medieval period had been a hiatus from the true nature of English Christianity and that it was possible to circumvent it in their understandings of the ecclesiastical history of their country.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering the religious implications of the subject matter, many of the individuals involved in the development of antiquarianism were members of the clergy (Sweet 2004: 56). Elizabeth Elstob, the only woman to have published on the subject during this era, lived and worked with her brother William, who was the rector of the London parishes of St Swithin’s and St Mary Bothaw’s, as well as an Anglo-Saxon linguist in his own right (Collins 1982: 108; Gretsch 1999: 174). Generally speaking, the early modern historians and antiquarians mentioned in this chapter were from the south of England, attended either Oxford or Cambridge and came from a class background that

allowed them the income and leisure time to undertake their studies. The Elstobs were again the anomaly; they were born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and when her brother died, Elizabeth Elstob was left penniless and was forced to give up her scholarly endeavours to become a governess (Gretsch 1999: 180-1).



Figure 8: Elizabeth Elstob by an unknown artist (E. Elstob 1715: i)

The work that was done in producing both translations and the tools for learning the language, such as the grammar produced by Elizabeth Elstob, must be considered one of the most important developments in the study of the Anglo-Saxon past to have taken place in the early modern period (Hughes 1982: 140), far surpassing the advances made in interpreting the meaning of those same texts or the related material remains. It was Elizabeth Elstob's Saxon homilies that made it possible to declare, as John Fortescue-Aland (1670-1746), the judge and legal scholar, did in 1714, that "The Saxon Homilies, and other Saxon writings, will further acquaint you that the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, destructive of all science, and against all common sense, was not thought of in the days of our Saxon ancestors" (Fortescue-Aland 1714: lxx). Transubstantiation, one of the most hotly contested points of theological debate between Catholics and Protestants during the Reformation, was therefore stripped of its legitimacy by not appearing in the ancient texts. The translation of these texts was absolutely key to their use in the continuing religious debate of the Restoration period.

It is clear from the Restoration era debates over the relationship between church and state, described fully below, that very great importance was placed on being able to read the key texts in their original language. Fortescue-Aland wrote that “He who will look into the Saxon laws, and read them in their native tongue, will find as clearly as can be, the foundation and principal materials of this noble building” (Fortescue-Aland 1714: xxv). For Fortescue-Aland, what he saw as the misattribution of the English Common Law to Norman rather than Saxon origins came from his contemporaries’ inability to read the laws in their original language. Translation was key, therefore, not only for understanding the religious past, but also the political past, and especially the relationship between the two.

The stories of the Conversion told during this period show that Bede’s story of the Augustinian mission and the key role played by St Gregory in that story remained an important source throughout this period. Historians and antiquarians alike repeatedly cited the story of St Gregory and the slave boys, explored in the previous chapter, throughout this period. A paraphrased version of this story can be found in almost all of the studies dating to the early modern era (see for example Verstegan 1605: 140-1). Whether or not this narrative simply caught their imaginations, it is clear that Bede’s authority and influence carried down through the generations. Similarly, the characterizations of the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxons from this time, where they were described at all, were based almost exclusively on Tacitus’ *Germania*. These two accounts of early medieval religion formed the majority of the material for the histories from this period. Many of the antiquarian texts and historical studies of the time simply included a paraphrased version of Bede’s account and did not enquire more deeply than that.

The engagement with text to the almost complete exclusion of material culture is specific to the study of the Anglo-Saxon period. Roman material remains were being studied at this time, as were prehistoric monuments such as Stonehenge and Avebury (Aubrey 1665-93; I. Jones 1655; Stukeley 1740, 1743). In the introduction to *Britannia et Hibernia*, Thomas Cox promised that the book, which is an enlargement of Camden’s *Britannia*, will describe antiquities “whether they be Roman, Saxon or Danish. Here we will mention such inscriptions as seem to be of value; and give some account of highways, camps, buildings, mosaic-works, coins, and instruments both religious and military” (T. Cox 1714-31: 96). In practice, however, the only antiquities that are described are Roman inscriptions and the occasional Roman coin. While the text does not mention the Anglo-Saxon material culture, heavy emphasis was placed on their language and the societies that promote the study of it (T. Cox 1714-31: 500, 556).



Figure 9: Stonehenge by Stukeley (Stukeley 1740: unpaginated)

Many of the historians of this period drew heavily on the *Ecclesiastical History*, but they were not all entirely uncritical of Bede's text. The clergyman and ecclesiastical historian John Inett (1646-1718), for instance, identified a chronological inconsistency in Bede's account of Ethelbert that he cannot reconcile (Inett 1704: 8). This did not prevent him from relying on this text for his material, but it does show that he viewed it with a critical eye. However, he ultimately decided that, because Bede's chronology is internally consistent, "it seems reasonable to leave him possessed of his authority, notwithstanding what is said to the contrary" (Inett 1704: 21). Bede's tale of King Lucius, which appears to be a mistranslation or a misunderstanding of the original story (see Chapter Two), often appears in the early modern literature. Several of the authors of the period tried to reconcile the account of King Lucius with what they knew of the history of Britain in order to confirm the early date of conversion found in Bede (Stillingfleet 1685: 60-4).

A further example of the reliance on textual sources can be seen in the early modern use of the Arthurian Legend to elucidate aspects of the Anglo-Saxon past. Woven through the history of the Anglo-Saxon period at this time was the story of King Arthur, whose dates appear to have been uncertain but who was believed by some, on the basis of the 9th century Welsh monk Nennius' writing on the subject, to have beaten the Saxons in twelve battles (Sammes 1676: 404). The historian of the Elizabethan period Patrick Collinson has shown that even those historians who disbelieved the stories of King

Arthur often included them in their histories, for reasons that are not clear (Collinson 1997: 43). Perhaps this narrative was so ingrained in the popular culture of the time that it had to be addressed by the scholarly texts on the period. Although its historicity was questioned by many, antiquarians such as John Leland saw it as crucial to the defence of national honour and therefore attempted to tie this narrative into the material record (Vine 2010: 25, 28).

Conversion in Context

It is nothing new to acknowledge the use made by both Catholics and Protestants of the antiquarian evidence during the long period of religious conflict that began under King Henry VIII. Much of the antiquarian study of the time was directed towards supporting the new Protestant English church, whilst a smaller number of individuals approached the history of the Conversion from a Catholic perspective and saw in the evidence support for the Roman Catholic Church and its authority in England. There would likely be considerably less written about the Conversion had it not been for the Reformation and its attendant anxieties. This has been convincingly argued by the historian Margaret Aston, who showed that the process of creating ruins during the dissolution of the monasteries had a role in creating antiquarianism. She stated that “the very process of casting off the past generated nostalgia for its loss” (Aston 1973: 255). In a sense the destruction of the past which occurred during this period served as a wake-up call for the scholars of the day. She argued that the iconoclasm of the Tudor period not only served as a deterrent to Catholic worship, but also had the unintended consequence of alerting those with an interest in history to the necessity of recording and preserving the past even as it was being destroyed (Aston 1973: 248). Whilst there is no evidence that early modern scholars connected the ruins they studied with the events of the Conversion period, this early emphasis on ancient monuments helped to develop an atmosphere of nostalgic interest in Britain’s past.

Equally, it has been shown that the Reformation had the effect of changing the English cultural perception of relics, which had been proven to be fakes and forgeries, and destroyed during the dissolution of the monasteries (Walsham 2010: 122-3). The simple possession of a relic during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was grounds for severe punishment, a fact that must have had a somewhat dampening effect on the collection of these items, even for antiquarian purposes, but it has been argued that the very act of outlawing religious relics allowed the subsequent surge of secular interest in antiquities (Walsham 2010: 140; Woolf 2003: 191-7). Despite the harsh retribution meted

out, relics continued to be collected, kept and venerated, under significantly different conditions from the pre-Reformation period; the relics had been removed from church control and entered into the possession of individuals where they had to be used in secret, a situation that made the continental Catholic missionaries of the counter-Reformation very uncomfortable (Walsham 2010: 126-7). It is perhaps not surprising that, under these conditions, there was little public discussion of the material culture related to the early Christians of England. Whilst the history of this period was intensively studied, scholars were largely silent on the objects of the early medieval period.

Early modern historians frequently placed their emphasis on Roman Christianity in Britain and throughout the Empire prior to the fall of Rome. Many believed that the origins of British Christianity lay as far back as the time of the Apostles. Bishop Edward Stillingfleet (1635-1699) argued that St Paul himself came to Britain to plant the first seeds of Christianity (Stillingfleet 1685: 39-48). John Inett wrote that, “by the encouragement of Constantine, and the succeeding Christian Emperors, the gospel had spread it self to the utmost bounds of the Empire, and was in a very flourishing state and condition, when the inundations of the northern people at once cover’d the face of Europe with confusion and blood and the blackest of errors” (Inett 1704: 6). Although Inett and many other authors of the time were very concerned with the Pelagian heresy that had been prevalent in post-Roman Britain, they were at least still dealing with a Christian population, whereas the paganism that followed the Saxon arrival was seen as a “dismal state” and very much to be lamented (Inett 1704: 7).

Despite an overwhelming feeling that the early medieval past held relevant lessons for contemporary society, some antiquarians rejected this view. The writings of John Foxe (1516-1587), the prominent martyrologist, exemplified the difficulty of reconciling the Roman origin of Anglo-Saxon Christianity with the anti-Catholic position taken by the Protestant historians of the time. As he put it:

For be it that England first received the Christian faith and religion from Rome ... yet their purpose followeth not thereby, that we must therefore fetch our religion from thence still, as from the chief well-head and fountain of all godliness. And yet as they are not able to prove the second, so neither have I any cause to grant the first, that is, that our Christian faith was first derived from Rome...” (Foxe 1570 [1853]: 306).

This was an unusual sentiment for the time, reflecting the strength of Foxe’s Protestant convictions and the polemical nature of his text. It was more common to simply downplay the role of the Roman church in the Anglo-Saxon conversion, as can be seen from the writings of many other authors of the time. It was generally believed that the

Roman missions received full credit for the Anglo-Saxon conversion, John Inett wrote, only because “the pomp of the Roman missions has made so much noise in the world, and the charity thereof has been so industriously brightened” (Inett 1704: 7). Protestant scholars such as Inett shared the credit between several different initiatives, of which the papal intervention was only one (Inett 1704: 7-8). They could not deny the role of Rome in the Conversion altogether, but they could minimise it by making it only one of many factors.

Others resisted this urge to lessen the importance of the Roman mission. Robert Brady disagreed with the general sentiment that the Anglo-Saxon church could have been somehow separate from Rome, writing:

True it is that in the Saxon times before the Conquest, at the request of kings, and other great personages, that Popes did confirm the foundations, liberties, and privileges of several monasteries and strengthen them (as the founders in those ignorant ages thought) by their benedictions upon the favorers, and anathema’s upon the infringers of them. And these applications to the Pope, were no real arguments of any just legal authority he had in this nation, but only of the opinion men had in those times of and deference to, the efficacy of his blessings and cursings” (Brady 1685: 88).

Brady’s acknowledgement of the power of the Pope during the early Christian period in England was rare amongst the Protestant antiquarians of the time.

Richard Verstegan (1548-1640) was one of the most outspoken defenders of the Catholic faith to use Anglo-Saxon history as his guide. Born in London around 1548 under the name Richard Rowlands, Verstegan was (amongst other things) a Catholic spy, a publisher of Catholic tracts and one of the first newspaper journalists (Arblaster 2004: ix, 1-2). It has been recently argued that his important antiquarian text, *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in Antiquities*, long seen as simple Catholic polemic, was in fact a restitution of a Germanic origin story for England, an idea which had become lost in the sixteenth century (Arblaster 2004: 89; Clement 1998: 33). He dedicated his work to King James I, optimistically referring to him as the defender of the faith (Verstegan 1605: ii) and is careful to portray him as “descended of the cheifest blood-Royall of our ancient English-Saxon kings” (Verstegan 1605: ii). Verstegan is amongst a very small number of Catholic scholars that used the Anglo-Saxon past for the direct opposite purpose to the general trend of Protestant legitimisation. For him, it was possible to draw a direct line between the missionaries sent from Rome to the court of King Ethelbert of Kent, and the imperilled (in Britain at least) Roman Catholic faith for which he suffered exile.

Whilst use of the Anglo-Saxon past by both the Catholic and Protestant historians of the early modern period to legitimate and support contemporary religious movements led to heavily biased understandings of the topic of Conversion, it is important to acknowledge the crucial role that the Reformation played in motivating studies of Anglo-Saxon religion. The battle over competing origin stories was the most important driver for the study of ecclesiastical history during this period. Without the conflict caused by the reformation, and the increased importance placed on the subject by those involved in the debate, the study of the Anglo-Saxon church would certainly not have gained as much ground, nor would it have been returned to so frequently in the antiquarian literature.

Contemporary Christianity and the Anglo-Saxon past

The study of the Anglo-Saxon past, especially its religious history, as we have seen, originated in the context of contemporary religious conflict, and remained heavily entangled in these debates throughout the early modern period. For the historians and antiquarians of this period:

The whole Reformation stands indebted to the Church of England for the great and successful services done by those of her communion; yet it cannot be denied, that the histories and antiquities of the English church, have not been carefully look'd into since the Reformation, as the defence and honour of our Holy Mother seem to have required from us (Inett 1704: i).

The study of the Conversion, however, must also be seen as being intertwined with the quotidian Christianity of the time, not just the intensely debated religious crises.

Biblical language and allusions were not uncommon in antiquarian writing. John Milton (1562-1647), the writer and polemicist best known for *Paradise Lost*, begins his telling of English history, published in 1670, with the biblical flood followed by the Greek myths before finally coming on to what we would recognise as English history (J. Milton 1671). This is indicative of the notions of the time in regards to the relationship between the biblical past and the historical past. Today we recognise a continuum from prehistory, through history, into the present; but the past as the seventeenth century scholar knew with certainty that it began with the Bible. It is impossible to overestimate the primacy of the written word in the Christian tradition and in Biblical ideas of the past. "In the beginning was the word...", after all. In his 2001 book about the relationship between archaeology and text, John Moreland argued that the iconoclasm of the Reformation led to an even greater dependence on the written word, replacing the previous belief in the

power of images (Moreland 2001: 55). Added to this was the Protestant doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* (meaning “by scripture alone”), and the relative ease of obtaining printed books (Moreland 2001: 57), all of which came together to produce an unprecedented situation in which religion, history and chronology could all only be derived from the written record, and preferably from the Bible.

The Conversion was often seen as having implications for the very nature of the Anglo-Saxons, turning them from violent Barbarians to peaceful, pious men:

Their Kings, laying aside the warlike and tough Tempers, became humble and pious, conformable to the genius of that Religion they had submitted themselves to; and their only ambition was, who should raise the noblest and most numerous monuments of piety, which soon became visible in all Parts of the Land (Samuel Daniel in Kennett 1719: 88).

This claim is not supported by reference to any actual “monuments of piety”, or any other material evidence to support it. At this point in time, prior to the evolution of a strong concept of the nature of evidence, textual evidence of these monuments is sufficient. The goal here was not a simple statement of fact, but rather a parable for contemporary populations.

Not only was Anglo-Saxon Christianity seen as the basis for the early modern church, but the scholars of the time also traced the problems of the Roman Catholic Church, and thus the causes of the Reformation, back to the relics of paganism, passed down from their incompletely converted pagan ancestors. Inett blamed St Gregory’s error in allowing the pagan population to keep their temples and his directive to rededicate the pagan festivals to Christian saints for the origin of “those usages which in time became a burthen [sic] and a reproach to the Western Church” (Inett 1704: 24). The Conversion has always been understood in relation to paganism, but there has been considerable change over time in the ways in which that paganism has been conceptualised. Early modern conceptions of paganism varied between antiquarians, but often Tacitus’s *Germania*, and the description he included of Germanic pagan religious practice were used to explain the pre-Christian religion of the Anglo-Saxons. However, in many cases, the terms ‘pagan’ and ‘Druid’ seem interchangeable, and the image projected for paganism generally seems to have become entangled in the antiquarian interest in the Druids and their religious practices.

One of the most interesting examples of a narrative created to legitimise the religion of England is the story of Joseph of Arimathea, which was retold throughout the antiquarian period and in fact retained its popularity well into the Victorian era. There

are two main strands of this narrative, one in which Jesus himself visited Britain with his uncle or great-uncle, Joseph of Arimathea, who may or may not have been a tin merchant, and another in which Joseph came to Britain carrying the Holy Grail in which he had placed Jesus' blood, or some other holy relic (D. K. E. Crawford 1993: 86; 1994; A. W. Smith 1989: 63). These narratives are tied in with the complex of myths about the Holy Grail and the Arthurian Legend. Deborah Crawford suggested that the motive for the creation of this legend was an attempt at building an apostolic connection to Britain which was not mediated through Rome but rather drawn directly from the source in the Holy Land (D. K. E. Crawford 1993: 93).

Many of the historians and antiquarians of the day rejected the story of Joseph's visit to England, often believing it to be propaganda by the monks of Glastonbury (Stillingfleet 1685). Thomas Cox was another early critic of the theory writing:

The tradition about Joseph of Arimathea seems to be an invention of the monks of Glastonbury, to advance the reputation of their own monastery. This is the more probable, because all the testimonies brought to confirm this tradition come from Glastonbury; and because the most ancient and inquisitive writers of our affairs make no mention of it" (T. Cox 1714-31: 37).

However, this myth was frequently repeated in the medieval literature and the fact that so many of the early modern historians made a point of disproving it in their texts means that it must have been an idea that had some currency at the time.

The relationship of the English monarchy to their European counterparts, especially the Hanoverian connection, was another source of motivation for English scholars. In 1715, Elstob dedicated *The Rudiments of Grammar for the English-Saxon Tongue* to the Princess of Wales, Caroline of Brandenburg-Ansbach, identifying her as the future queen, "in whose royal offspring the Saxon line is to be continued, with the increase of all princely and heroic virtues" (E. Elstob 1715: unnumbered page). This was an appeal not only to the Princess' royal patronage, but also to her Teutonic ancestry, a key aspect of the monarchy of the day. This was a common feature of the royal dedications of the period. In 1722, during the rule of George I, Gibson made explicit the affinity between the Anglo-Saxon past and the Hanoverian present that connected the king's various dominions together by writing a dedication in his translation of Camden which tied his ancestors to their origins in the king's Hanoverian territory (Sweet 2004: 189). This shared past was seen to mean a legitimate present and future of Hanoverian rule.

Despite this important connection, many of the scholars of this period appear to have been conscious of a certain amount of prejudice against their early medieval subjects. Elstob wrote strongly in favour of the study of the Anglo-Saxon past, and against the characterization of the Anglo-Saxons as barbarians. She wrote:

I fear, if things were rightly consider'd, that the charge of barbarity would rather fall upon those who, while they fancy themselves adorn'd with the embellishments of foreign learning, are ignorant, even to the point of barbarity, of the faith, religion, the laws and customs, and the language of her ancestors" (Elstob 1709: vi).

Unusually for the time, Elstob was specifically interested in bringing women into this field of study, which she considered to be very suitable for them. Her hope was "that by publishing somewhat in Saxon, I wou'd invite the ladies to be acquainted with the language of their predecessors" (Elstob 1709: vii). Her defence of the right of women to learn, and specifically the appropriate nature of the Anglo-Saxon past as a field for women, is unique amongst the antiquarians of the early eighteenth century. In her dedication to the *Homily*, she emphasized the connection between Queen Anne, Queen Elizabeth I and as far back as Queen Bertha, pointing to the roles each of these female leaders played in the religious change that occurred during their lifetimes (Elstob 1709: unnumbered page).

The antiquarians drew heavily upon Anglo-Saxon history to support many aspects of their own lives. "Here we are to search for the form of our Constitution in Church and State; the original of our Laws, the old Geography of the Island; with every other useful particular" (Wise 1738: 11). It was during this time that a strong emphasis was placed on the Anglo-Saxon assembly as a precursor to the parliament. Squire makes it clear that the modern parliament is based in the Anglo-Saxon tradition which he clearly connects to the German tradition. His work relies very heavily on Tacitus to show that the tradition of parliamentary governance is legitimated by its age and connection to the Germanic past.

Other parts therefore of our antiquities may be either known or passed by as matters of curiosity and entertainment rather than public benefit; but the history of the civil constitution cannot be too carefully studied, or too minutely enquired into, especially in such a country as ours is, divided into parties, and where each party confidently appeals to the antient constitution of the kingdom for the truth of the opinions it maintains, and pretends to make that the measure of its political principles, by which alone it is ready to stand or fall (Squire 1745: 3).

The history of both the Anglo-Saxon church and state became part of a debate about the nature of state and church power which raged at the turn of the eighteenth century. The

question at hand was ultimately one of the ability of the church to govern itself, and the degree to which the state should have control. This debate divided along High and Low Anglican lines, and called into question the power that the state held over the church. Using the name of Sir Bartholemew Shower, a Tory lawyer with political connections, Francis Atterbury, published his *Letter to a Convocation-Man* in 1696 (Bennett 1975: 48). Francis Atterbury was a clergyman and writer who would go on to become the Bishop of Rochester in 1713 (Bennett 1975). The *Letter* questioned what had, to that point, become accepted doctrine about the nature of the Act of Submission of the Clergy of 1534, which was that the Convocations of the church could not meet, debate or enact canons without the assent of the King (Bennett 1975: 49). Atterbury and his fellow Tories disagreed with this understanding of the act and demanded the autonomy of the Church from the king and parliament.

Canon William Wake's response, *The Authority of Christian Princes over their Ecclesiastical Synods*, was printed in 1697, and was received less well, despite his superior knowledge of the history of the Church and of Convocation specifically, in part because he accidentally insulted a large number of clergymen (Bennett 1975: 51-2). Atterbury's impassioned defence in 1700 followed two years of intense study into the history of Convocation in order to counter Wake's historical argument (Bennett 1975: 52). White Kennett, later Bishop of Peterborough and avid antiquarian, wrote a scathing critique of Atterbury in 1702, which brought him down clearly on the side of Wake. Even Edmund Gibson, later Bishop of London, whose edition of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* remained the standard text until the nineteenth century, was drawn into the debate and wrote to defend the power of the King and parliament over the Church (S. Taylor 2008). All of the men involved in this debate, whether Whig or Tory, Low or High Church, relied heavily on Anglo-Saxon history to reinforce their cases and legitimate their perspectives on the issue. Basing his argument on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Kennett wrote that:

The Saxons kept to the due distinction of their Wittena-gemot or parliament, and their circ-gemot, haly-mot, or synod; and tho' the clergy were mixt in the former, as common subjects, and one state of the realm; yet in the latter, they were alone and by themselves, as the peculiar officers and administrators of religion (Kennett 1730: 214)

This assertion is pertinent to this study for several reasons, namely the connection drawn between both the political and religious spheres as well as the way in which the Anglo-Saxon model is put forth not only as historical proof of the correctness of his argument, but also as a model that would be advantageous to follow. In this case the Anglo-Saxon past was used not only to legitimate the arguments but also the actions of the parties involved.

The Convocation Controversy was a conflict in which opponents on both sides of the debate argued from the same evidence. Wake devoted an entire section to the Anglo-Saxon methods of lay and ecclesiastical gatherings, attempting to put forward “a right understanding of the method in which ecclesiastical affairs were wont to be transacted, in those times, in which Christianity began to be settled among us by our Saxon ancestors” (Wake 1697: 164). He believed this to be important because “the church of England, beyond most churches in the world, has a peculiar veneration for the discipline, as well as the doctrine, of the primitive church” (Wake 1697: iv). Atterbury, on the other side of the debate, used the same evidence to argue the opposite point, that the king ought not have power of the affairs of the church. The relevance of this debate for this thesis is twofold: first, that evidence from the Anglo-Saxon church was being used to adjudicate arguments within the Protestant religion, and second, that the combination of Anglo-Saxon Church and state were being used in tandem to support the arguments for early eighteenth century church and state. The writers of the time were appealing to the past to settle pertinent questions of the day about both of the major sources of power in their time. Not only should the church look to its past for direction and the state look to its past for structure, but they should attempt to stand in the same relation to each other as the ancient Anglo-Saxon church and state.

The English Christian Self and the Material World

Although the early modern period saw the development of proto-archaeological studies of certain aspects of the past, the Anglo-Saxon past was not studied in terms of its material culture until the late eighteenth century. It was not unusual for writers of this time to emphasize the importance of English people studying English history. Particularly in the eighteenth century, when Classical learning was most highly prized and the Grand Tour was highly valued (Brennan 2004: 53), the patriotic urge to study the English past had somewhat been lost. Those scholars who did study England often studied the Roman past, to the exclusion of the other parts of English history. Scholars of Anglo-Saxon history, therefore, were impassioned in their calls to their countrymen to take up the history of England.

The very real importance of self-identifying as a Christian nation caused an increase of interest in the Conversion. The archivist and antiquarian Francis Wise wrote feelingly about “the particular pleasure which this period ought to afford to every English mind, in beholding our Countrymen laid under greater tye than that of arms, namely of duty and

gratitude to their conquerors" (Wise 1738: 9). The establishment of a national church, so closely tied to the monarchy, necessitated a new form of religious proto-nationalism that venerated the history of church and state together. The English legal system, much like the English Church, was traced to the Saxon past, through the writings of Bede. John Fortescue-Aland, in his preface to Sir John Fortescue's fourteenth century legal text, wrote, "And tho', says he [Bede], the laws of the Saxons have undergone some variations, thro' time and age, which change every thing, yet they continue in the main to this day" (Fortescue-Aland 1714: xvii-iii). Fortescue-Aland's goal in publishing this text, as made clear in his preface, is to discourage his contemporaries from thinking that there is any possible Norman origin for the laws of England (Fortescue-Aland 1714: iv). The establishment of the antiquity of the state, by way of its laws, was as crucial to establish as that of the church.

It was during this period that the antiquarian Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682) first excavated what we now know to have been a pagan Anglo-Saxon cremation cemetery at Walsingham in Norfolk in 1668 (T. Browne 1893). Browne's study was very important to the development of archaeology generally and has been seen as a landmark in the history of the discipline (Schnapp 1993: 197), but because Browne was not aware that the remains dated to the Anglo-Saxon period, it cannot be said to have had any impact on the understanding of the material of the Anglo-Saxon past, except in hindsight. It is possible, however, to see a first glimpse of an attempt to understand the religious affiliation of an ancient grave in his interpretation of these cremation urns. He wrote, "Christians abhorred this way of obsequies, and though they stickt not to give their bodies to be burnt in their lives, detested that mode after death; affecting rather a depositure than absumption" (T. Browne 1893: 17). This is an early example of an antiquary connecting excavated funerary remains with religious belief and practice, an idea that would go on to become the cornerstone of the study of early medieval religion.

If the Christianity of the Anglo-Saxons was not studied due to its familiarity, the paganism of the period was distant enough to be ignored for precisely the opposite reason. The period in which the Anglo-Saxons were in Briton, but not yet Christianized, was the "Dark Age" in more than one way. Not only was this a value judgement, condemning the morals of the time, it was also poorly understood enough to be seen as cast into darkness by the lack of knowledge on the subject. The lack of written records dating to the pagan period condemned it to being labelled as barbarous. As is appropriate to the text-based antiquarianism of the period, what was lacking was textual evidence. Left with little more than Tacitus' account, the antiquarians of this period mostly ignored

the religious practice of the pagan Anglo-Saxons that they discussed. There are a few exceptions, most notably the aforementioned Roman Catholic antiquary Richard Verstegan. Verstegan's account of the Germanic paganism of the Anglo-Saxon population appears to have been heavily based on Tacitus' descriptions, leading him to write "true it is that they lived according to the law of nature, and reason, wanting nothing but the knowledge of the true God, for they adored Idols, and unto them offered sacrifices, yea they worshipped Planets, Woods, and Trees..." (Verstegan 1605: 67). This attitude of acceptance where a lack of physical evidence is concerned is one of the aspects that delineate this period from the one that followed. By the beginning of the Victorian era, by contrast, a strong emphasis on the nature of evidence gave rise to a focus on finding evidence of pagan religion, especially built temple structures. At the time that Verstegan was writing, however, material evidence was not yet required for belief.



Figure 10: Verstegan's Woodcuts of "Anglo-Saxon" Idols (Verstegan 1605: 55, 57)

Verstegan was rare amongst the earliest scholars of the Anglo-Saxon past in his interest in the material culture, specifically the material culture of paganism. This is not an archaeological interest, since he was not discussing material culture that actually existed in the world, but rather an imagined material culture which he had created for the purposes of his study. As Bremmer has shown, this was in direct contradiction to Tacitus' account, which explicitly stated that there were no likenesses of the Germanic pagan gods (Bremmer 2000: 148). The woodcuts (cut by Verstegan himself (Clement 1998: 34)) in his text show stylistic statues on classical plinths framed by Renaissance arches, purporting to represent Anglo-Saxon images of the pagan gods (Verstegan 1605: 69-72, 74, 76, 78). Verstegan pretends in his text not to know why the gods are depicted in the

manner in which he presents them, presumably to give more credence to his depiction, all the while having both invented and drawn them himself (Bremmer 2000: 150). This scholarly charade produced an invented religious material culture for the pagan Anglo-Saxons which bore no relationship to the actual material past. Despite this fact, however, Verstegan's study is interesting because of his willingness to look at the pagan religious past and for his understanding that, although the antiquarians of his day were yet to recognize it, the pagans must also have had material culture through which it would be possible to study their beliefs and practices.

Conclusion

To what can we attribute this relative lack of interest in the material of the Anglo-Saxon past? It is especially difficult to understand given the burgeoning emphasis at this time on the material culture of other periods in the history of the British Isles. Perhaps, like Browne, they failed to recognize these material remains for what they truly were. Crucially, however, none of the antiquarians of this period appear to have been actively looking for Anglo-Saxons in the archaeological record. The reliance on, and relative availability of, textual sources explored above is certainly part of the reason behind this focus, but this is not sufficient to explain the extent to which the early medieval material was ignored. The Royal Charter granted to the Society of Antiquaries in 1751 declared that "the study of antiquity and the history of former times, has ever been esteemed highly commendable and useful, not only to improve the minds of men, but also to incite them to virtuous and noble actions; and such as may hereafter render them famous and worthy examples to late posterity" (Anonymous 1800). This was perhaps more true of the aims of the Society prior to the granting of the Charter than of any other incarnation since. This chapter has covered a long period of time during which there were many changes in the study of the Anglo-Saxon past and many attempts were made to explain the Conversion. We have seen how highly politicised and religiously contested this subject was and the highly fraught tenor of much of the debate surrounding this topic. This chapter has shown the development of the study of the Anglo-Saxon past, as it can be seen through the lens of Conversion studies, from its inception out of the medieval textual remains, through its intensely political infancy and finally into its proto-archaeological incarnation as a discipline which interpreted the material remains of the past to inform scholarly understandings.

What is clearly missing from the works of these antiquarians is any hint of the nuanced research questions which we ask today of the evidence for Conversion. Whilst today we

believe it is important to ask both “why convert?” and “how did Conversion happen?”, during this period, the answers to these questions were not only considered to be provided definitively by the works of Bede and other textual sources, they were considered to be so well known as to require no further inquiry. One of the reasons why the study of the Conversion had not yet become solidified during this period is that there was an overwhelming feeling that, if the past can be divided into the past of self and the past of other, the past of the Anglo-Saxon Christians was part of the past of self. This may also account for the late recognition of Anglo-Saxon material culture as distinct from Roman or Romano-British artefacts. In studying the prehistoric peoples of Britain and indeed the Romans there was a clear sense of other-ness to their respective pasts. However, in the case of the Anglo-Saxon, especially once they had become Christians, they could not be seen as different enough to warrant the interest accorded to other topics.

The English Christianity of this time, perhaps in part because of its self-referential nature, seems to have appeared too familiar, too well known, to be the object of material culture-based inquiry. When, during the Convocation Controversy, William Wake wrote about the extreme veneration for the ancient church held by himself and his contemporaries (Wake 1697: iv), one does not get the sense that he sees this as a weakness, but rather as a strength of the English Church. The areas in which work on early medieval ecclesiastical history were carried out during this period were those areas in which there was some sort of conflict or debate that forced a closer inspection of the past. The extremely canonical nature of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, and of the other texts discussed in the previous chapter, the veneration of which made it extremely difficult to contradict their historical facts, made this a period in which the textual sources were translated, re-worked, interpreted and argued over, but one in which their primacy was never challenged.

The English antique has become a general and fashionable study: and the discoveries of a chartered Society of Antiquaries, patronized by the best of monarchs, and boasting among its members some of the greatest ornaments of the British Empire, have rendered the recesses both of the papal and heathen antiquities much easier of access (Brand 1813a: xiv).

Chapter 4: Material Transitions 1750-1830

Whilst the true mania for the Anglo-Saxon past did not fully take hold until the Victorian period, the origins of the archaeology of the English Conversion can be found in the century before Queen Victoria took the throne. We have seen in the previous chapter that the Conversion was the subject of historical interest for successive generations of scholars during the sixteenth through to the early eighteenth centuries. It was during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that the first attempts were made to tie together newly identified Anglo-Saxon archaeological remains with the long recognized textual sources for the Conversion. In general, the published accounts from this period retained a heavy dependency on the medieval texts and documents, but the growing antiquarian emphasis on material culture demanded reconciliation between the texts and the emerging excavated remains. The chronological range covered by this chapter bridges two conventionally separate historical periods, the end of the Enlightenment and the beginning of the Romantic era, from 1750 to 1830. They have been merged here deliberately, in order to reflect the unified nature of the developments that occurred in the material culture-based study of the Conversion within this time frame. The period covered by this chapter begins in the 1750s with the emergence of the first studies which used material remains to discuss religious change and ends at the turn of the Victorian age.

The change in Conversion studies that came about in the middle of the eighteenth century can be seen as closely linked to the burgeoning number of cemetery excavations undertaken during this period. The work of the Reverend Bryan Faussett (1720-1776) and his contemporaries significantly increased the number of Anglo-Saxon artefacts excavated and recovered. Combined with a surge in Romantic interest in ancient ruins in the natural landscape, this era proved a fertile time for the developing field of Anglo-Saxon archaeology. This chapter argues that the discoveries of Anglo-Saxon material remains were interpreted within a framework created by fusion between the well-known

textual sources and the new fever of Romanticism that swept through the country. It was during this 80 year period – almost a lifetime – that we find the roots of the intense Anglo-Saxonism that followed in the Victorian age and hints of the depth of interest that would come to shape nationalist narratives and provide an enduring legacy for the modern study of the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England.

The relationship between the Romantic movement in art and literature and the development of a proto-nationalistic tradition of Anglo-Saxon archaeology thus lies at the heart of this chapter. It has been argued that the modern historical consciousness developed in this moment as a result of the Romantic cultural paradigm (Bann 1995). The arrival of public museums, archives and libraries as repositories for the shared history of England also influenced the ways in which early medieval remains were studied. The origins of a material culture-focused study of the English Conversion began here, generated primarily by the burgeoning amount of funerary evidence and the relationship of that evidence to the existing and well-rehearsed textual sources. A strong emphasis was increasingly placed on the value of the artefacts, used alongside the texts, as a means of determining the religious affiliation of the excavated dead. Anglo-Saxon archaeology was therefore, at its gestation, closely connected with studies of early Christianity and the Conversion.

This chapter, therefore, captures a field of scholarship in transition, changing from a tradition of an entirely text-based, historical study of the Conversion to a discipline that increasingly incorporated - not always with ease - the material culture of the past. Scholars of the previous century and a half had valorized and brought to the fore the study of the Anglo-Saxons as the real English Protestant forefathers who had created and shaped the English nation. The scholars who studied the Anglo-Saxons between 1750 and 1830 were increasingly interested in the physical remains of the period and able to bring the material evidence to bear on these widely held historical ideas.

Enlightenment, Romanticism and the Development of Historical Consciousness

Writing in the 1730s, the politician and diplomatist Lord Bolingbroke had expressed the national and civic importance of the study of history, citing its value as a means to both individual and collective self-improvement (Bolingbroke 1792: 14). This emphasis on the usefulness of history to the nation and its people as a means of producing an improved citizenry was a key element in motivating the study of the Anglo-Saxon past.

Antiquarianism in this period combined both Enlightenment and Romantic attitudes towards history, drawing together the epistemological rigor that so dominated the Enlightenment, with the Romantic emotive connection to the past inhabitants of Britain and the emergent sense of British nationhood.

The eighteenth century witnessed unprecedented shifts in the nature of historical method (Moore and Morris 2008: 4). History as a discipline changed from a “literary genre whose ‘borders’ were open to other forms of literature” and emerged as “the paradigmatic form of knowledge to which all others aspired” (Bann 1995: 4). Two important large-scale Enlightenment histories were produced in the latter half of the eighteenth century which greatly influenced how scholars thought about the past and changed the way history was written. David Hume’s *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*, published in eight volumes in 1778, and Edward Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, published between 1776 and 1789, were seminal in their contribution to modern historical methodology. History as we know it today came into being in the eighteenth century, drawing inspiration from the philosophy of these great Enlightenment thinkers. In his seminal 1950 article, *Ancient History and the Antiquarian*, the Italian historiographer Arnaldo Momigliano showed that at this time, what he termed “philosophic history” was combined with antiquarian methods to create a new type of historical research that was both more exacting in its relationship with evidence and yet still able to make generalized philosophical statements about the past (Momigliano 1950: 311). Tension remained, however, between history, which was valued for its academic and social contributions, and antiquarianism, which was not valued - or at least not publicly lauded - outside of the societies and scholarly groups who undertook it. Rosemary Sweet has described this as a conflict that was ostensibly between ‘perfect’ history, written as literary narrative, “full of rhetoric, often polemical and which concerned itself causal explanations”, and antiquarian objectivity and concern with non-narrative history, as collectors of the raw material from which perfect history might later be written (Sweet 1997: 52).

The changes that took place in historical methodology during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century had implications for the relationship between history and religion by calling into question the Biblical timeline established by Bishop Ussher. This, in turn, influenced the antiquarians of the day, who were struggling to fit their newly discovered prehistoric objects into a chronology determined by the Bible (Schnapp 1993: 285-9; Trigger 2006: 113). Although the biblical timescale became increasingly contested, there was no wholesale rejection of Christian beliefs during this time. The

majority of prominent eighteenth-century historians managed to maintain Christian belief whilst at the same time rejecting biblical chronologies (Moore and Morris 2008: 14). Religion was integral to the Romantic view of the past. Kevin Morris argued that, since the dominant ethos of the day was Christianity, it was natural that some of the Romantics should look for a specifically religious form of expression in historical Christianity (K. L. Morris 1984: 18). The followers of the Romantic movement developed a special interest in medieval Catholicism and its material legacies, for example, in contrast to their Enlightenment predecessors and contrary to their own accepted Protestant beliefs (K. L. Morris 1984: 35).



Figure 11: The Chancel and Crossing of Tintern Abbey, Looking towards the East Window, J.M.W. Turner 1794

The Romantic ideal of primitive Christianity can be seen in William Wordsworth's (1770-1850) *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, a series of poems about the religious history of Britain, first published in 1822. This collection contains four sonnets based on Bede's interpretation of the Conversion, entitled *Glad Tidings*, *Paulinus*, *Persuasion* and *Conversion* (Wordsworth 1954: 348-50). In *Glad Tidings* Wordsworth writes, "By Augustin led/They come- and onward travel without dread/Chanting in barbarous ears a tuneful prayer/Sung for themselves, and for those they would free!" (Wordsworth 1954: 348). In *Conversion* he replicates Bede's tale of Coifi, describing his ride into the temple and the hurling of the spear, with the imagined result that "Temple and altar sink, to hide their shame/Amid oblivious weeds" (Wordsworth 1954: 350). In this poetic reimagining of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* we see how Anglo-Saxon history, religious faith and the Romantic artistic sensibility were tied together in the early nineteenth century. The Romantic attitude toward history, whilst sharing some characteristics with that of the Enlightenment, was heavily influenced by the aesthetic and emotional experience of the past. The artists and writers of the Romantic school became increasingly drawn to the romance of the ruined churches and castles as inspiration for their creative work (Heffernan 1984). Cities, especially those cities with classical ruins such as Rome, were viewed not as they stood, but through a lens created by the ruins of their past (Thomas 2008: 68). The emphasis in art, poetry and creative writing shifted to history, spirituality, landscape and proto-nationalistic ideals. All of these factors also affected the development of antiquarianism. Wordsworth's well-known poem invoking both the ruin and the natural landscape setting of Tintern Abbey, published in 1798, hinged on the importance of this landscape to both the historical and religious self (Wordsworth 1798: 191). By the end of the eighteenth century, ruins were valued less for their objective historical worth and more for their power to evoke and inspire great art. Wordsworth was expressing his generation's emotional connection with the ruins of a lost national past and evoking the simplicity and piety of ancient England, a view that was shared by many of his contemporaries (see Janowitz 1990: 54-5), but which is most clearly visualized in the work of the Romantic painters.



Figure 12: Old Sarum, John Constable 1834

Towards the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, a seminal shift occurred in what was considered the appropriate subject matter for historical paintings. The Romantic painters were beginning to reject the depiction of history as a series of static scenes inspired by historical and biblical texts (Heffernan 1984: 70-2). This shift in subject matter, exemplified in the work of Constable and Turner, involved a more realistic portrayal of ancient monuments in the landscape.



Figure 13: Rievaulx Abbey, J.M.W. Turner 1825

In Constable's depiction of the ruin of Old Sarum, Heffernan has argued that the dramatic interplay between light and shadow both signifies and yet displaces the bloody conflicts that led to the destruction of the site (Heffernan 1984: 77). This emphasis on realism in depicting ruins as they stood in the landscape in part provoked the further development of antiquarian interest and even effected a change in antiquarian illustrations of buildings, monuments and artefacts. Sam Smiles has argued for a momentum in the eighteenth century towards a more accurate scrutiny of physical evidence and an emphasis on visual recording that was unprecedented (Smiles 2003: 177). One of the consequences of this development occurred within The Society of Antiquaries of London, an organization that recognized the importance of preserving pictorial information for posterity and began to employ draftsmen to draw plans as precisely as possible (Smiles 2003: 177). Such draftsmen made possible the creation of typologies and chronologies of architectural features and buildings. For the first time the differences between Saxon and Norman architecture were distinguished by shape, form and style. This emphasis on the drawn record also facilitated greater and wider comparison. Plans and drawings could be shared, accessed and evaluated without the need to travel long distances to view the original monuments (Smiles 1994: 18). This new form of draftsmanship gave British antiquity a "cognitive shape" and placed it firmly in the imagination of the British nation (Smiles 2003: 180).



Figure 14: Wells Cathedral Section from East to West, John Carter 1807/1808

Just as ruins provoked emphasis on spiritual and emotional concerns and a movement gathered pace that sought to identify and preserve historically important landscapes,

standing church structures also inspired the Romantic imagination. The Yorkshire antiquary John-Charles Brooke (1748-1794) projected his won Romantic spiritual ideas back into the Anglo-Saxon past when he described the church of Kirkdale, Yorkshire as:

extremely beautiful and romantic... It is situated in a fruitful vale, surrounded with hanging woods, and watered with a brook; the whole secluded from the world, being far removed from any inhabitants, and well adapted to give us an idea of the wisdom and piety of our Saxon ancestors, in chusing [sic] for such a purpose, a situation so well calculated to inspire with devotion (Brooke 1777: 200)

The eighteenth century in England witnessed an unprecedented rise in interest in antiquities. The Society of Antiquaries of London, which had been established for more than 60 years, began to publish reports from their members in 1770, under the title *Archaeologia*, and between the descriptions of Roman inscriptions (Carlisle 1770), the mysterious Druidical stones (Watson 1773) and even learned discussions of the edibility of cranes (Pegge 1773b), the occasional Anglo-Saxon article could be found. In 1755, William Stukeley published the first paper on an Anglo-Saxon site, presenting a short discussion of what he characterized as a “Roman-Saxon” sanctuary in Westminster (Stukeley 1755: 40). The primary focus of early articles like this, however, was usually the surviving churches and inscriptions dating to the later Anglo-Saxon period.

In 1819, Anna Gurney followed in Elizabeth Elstob’s footsteps by publishing *A Literal Translation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, proving that perhaps Elstob’s stated aim of opening the field of Anglo-Saxon studies to women had not gone completely unfulfilled. Anna Gurney was an independently wealthy woman who had been paralyzed as an infant and who, in the sermon given at her funeral, was contrasted to “the listless, fanciful, and indolent novel reader on the sofa! How manfully did she grapple with one language one after another!” (E. Hoare 1857: 18). Her translation was published anonymously, however the preface specified that it had been undertaken by “A Lady in the Country”, therefore anonymity was not conditioned in this instance by gender, although one suspects that the unwillingness to claim her work may attest to continuing conservatism. Although her version of the *Chronicle* was quickly superseded by Ingram’s collated edition (Gurney 1819: unnumbered page), she went on to become a correspondent of many important linguists of the age and to be the first female member of the British Archaeological Association, and later the only female member of the Royal Archaeological Institute (see Chapter Five). Gurney’s work and position in the scholarly networks of the period were unique. It was not until the early twentieth century that women again took part in the study of the Anglo-Saxon past in such a public way. Her life and work are ripe for further

biographical research as her unique position as a woman in this field, and her contributions to it, have not yet been fully explored.

Despite remaining less popular than the study of Roman and Saxon antiquities, the eighteenth century witnessed progress in prehistoric studies in Britain. For the majority of the eighteenth century, conceptions of ancient Britain remained close to the seventeenth-century view. Advances in excavation techniques and a growing understanding of stratigraphic relationships, derived from geological enquiry, began to facilitate significant advances that would set the scene for the nineteenth century (MacGregor 2003: 164; Sweet 2004: 152). Fieldwork had been revolutionized in the early part of the eighteenth century by the pioneering work of William Stukeley (1687-1765), whose work on Stonehenge and other sites in the area is noted for its attention to detail (Piggott 1989). The boundaries laid out by the biblical narrative were not yet challenged and artefacts were therefore studied within a greatly compressed chronology (Sweet 2004: 152). Images of the Ancient Britons relied upon the imagination of antiquarians rather than any evidentiary base, referring to romantic images of “Welsh bards and Ossianic warriors or the tottering edifices of Druidic theology and learning” (Sweet 2004: 153). Emphasis was primarily placed upon the Roman and post-Roman past, and it was in these areas that antiquarianism made its most significant advances in the eighteenth century.

Fervor for Roman antiquities in Britain reached a peak in the eighteenth century, a phenomenon explored extensively in recent scholarship (Hingley 2000, 2008; Sweet 2004). The Roman occupation was seen as a civilizing event which tamed the wild and ungoverned barbarian Britons and brought them into the light of the classical world (Sweet 2004: 185-6). Combining newly illustrated and increasingly accurate military maps with written sources, eighteenth-century antiquarians took an outline, created by the classical texts and fleshed out by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scholars, such as Leland, and turned it into a far more precise understanding of the Roman past. More material evidence than had ever previously been available was integrated, leading to a much fuller understanding of Roman Britain (Hingley 2008).

Interest in the Anglo-Saxon past also underwent a surge during this period, compared to the degree to which it featured in the antiquarian dialogue in the early part of the eighteenth century. The connections between the Germanic past and the Hanoverian royal family were in part responsible for an intense interest in Anglo-Saxon and Germanic connections (Sweet 2004: 189-90). Writing in the first quarter of the

eighteenth century, Edmund Gibson, editor of Camden's *Britannia*, dedicated his translation of that text to George I, careful to attribute the origins of Britain to "your Majesty's Dominions in Germany" (Camden 1722: i). The familial connection between the British royal family and the German elite continued to be an important factor in the political and cultural life of the country until the Second World War (see Chapter Six). The antiquarians who supported the Hanoverian monarchy were particularly interested in connecting the political present with the historical past, to dramatize and valorize hegemonic connections to Saxon ancestry (Sweet 2004: 189). Individual antiquarians chose to celebrate the Roman or the Anglo-Saxon or even the Druidical past, but all of their work was born out of a shared desire to produce an origin story for England which rooted the nation firmly in an heroic past.

Regionalism in antiquarian studies also burgeoned around the turn of the nineteenth century. William Cunnington and Sir Richard Colt Hoare undertook their large scale study of the history of the county of Wiltshire during this period (R. C. Hoare 1975), published between 1810 and 1822. Hoare created an important text, largely describing the barrows and burials of his local region. These gentlemen scholars attempted to perform an empirical analysis of the excavated remains, publishing under the motto, "We speak from facts, not theory" (R. C. Hoare 1975: 7). Lacking a full understanding of stratigraphy and a chronology which would have allowed for adequate time depth, sadly meant that this project ultimately fell short of its mark (Schnapp 1993: 284). In the end, Colt Hoare was never able to identify the group or groups who had created the prehistoric monuments he had excavated, but together his small team produced two studies of the region. The first volume, *The Ancient History of Wiltshire*, was primarily focused on the prehistoric and Roman materials, and the second, *The History of Modern Wiltshire*, included the medieval monuments and genealogies of the county families (R. C. Hoare 1822, 1975). Whilst occasional mention is made of the Saxons, and reference is also made to the early medieval graves excavated by the Reverend James Douglas (R. C. Hoare 1975), for the most part, the post-Roman, pre-Domesday period is largely missing from this otherwise comprehensive early exploration of Wiltshire.

Despite the density of studies being undertaken and the political relevance and piquancy of antiquarian research, this was also a time when the antiquary was most open to ridicule and scorn from many directions (Scalia 2007: 4). Although Hoare optimistically announced in his *History of Modern Wiltshire* that "The happy period is at length arrived when the labours of an antiquary are no longer regarded as useless, and when works on British Topography meet with favourable reception" (R. C. Hoare 1822: vii), this was not

borne out by popular depictions of antiquarians. Caricatures were produced in many formats, from newspaper cartoons to Sir Walter Scott's 1816 novel, *The Antiquary*, which presents the characters of the antiquaries as gullible and stupid, ready to assign a Roman past to any object or inscription (W. Scott 1816). Despite this seemingly universal demeaning of the antiquarian during the Romantic period, it has been argued that the relationship between the popular culture of ridicule and the antiquarian was complicated and not as uniformly dismissive as it appears. Scalia argued that although the Romantic writers consistently demeaned antiquaries, they simultaneously acknowledged a contribution to the popular understanding of British history and consistently betrayed an appreciation of and debt to antiquarian research in their writing (Scalia 2007: 4).

Museums and Heritage

The cultural use, interpretation and display of ancient artefacts underwent a crucial change during this period. The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed an important shift in the collection, display and perceived social value of objects. In 1753 the British Museum was created, which at this stage contained all of the books and manuscripts which would later become the collection held at the British Library. The museum was founded by the bequest of Sir Hans Sloane and as a result of the Museums Act. This was a profoundly patriotic act of parliament, the purpose of which was to collate and preserve the records of the nation for the citizens of Britain. The urge to preserve the written records of England for the benefit of the kingdom was in keeping with the emphasis placed on tracing all institutions – legal, religious and political – back to the Anglo-Saxon past (Kidd 1999: 91). The Museums Act codified the eighteenth-century attitude towards history as an important nationalistic and civic activity. More importantly, it placed equal weight and importance on both the material culture and the texts as keys to understanding the past.

The museum was envisaged as a form of public good for the citizenry of Britain. In the first few decades of the second half of the eighteenth century, several privately owned collections were transferred to the possession of the state and became publicly accessible. Following the fire in the Cotton Library in 1731, the report produced to discuss the damage to the kingdom's records held there emphasized the need for better collection and preservation of the country's historical texts (Anonymous 1732). It was not until 1753, however, when the British Museum was created in order to house the collections of manuscripts and artefacts which had been bought by the crown on the death of Sir Hans Sloane in 1753, that the Cotton Library collection was finally given a home (Museums Act 1753; Caygill 1994). His will, written and amended repeatedly between 1739 and

1752, gave first the King, and failing that the Royal Society, the opportunity to purchase his extensive collection of books, manuscripts, antiquities and specimens and create a museum from them (Caygill 1994: 45). Sloane's own extensive collection, made up in part by the collections of William Courten and Sir Thomas Browne, was joined by the archives and manuscripts which had been salvaged from the fire in the Cottonian Library in 1731 (Cherry 1994: 198). Finally, the Harleian Library, a collection of manuscripts assembled by the Harley family, was also purchased by the crown and the museum was created in Montagu House in Bloomsbury (Caygill 1994: 53).

The Museums Act, which created the repository for these items, was intended to conserve the history of the country for posterity and for the education of the citizens of Britain, as well as a means to keep the collection together without "the least diminution or separation, and be kept for the use and benefit of the publick, with free access to view and peruse the same" (Anonymous 1753: 13-4). The collection included artefacts and texts from many countries, but there was a clear patriotic rhetoric behind the founding of the museum. The Museums Act of 1753, although it had the effect of preserving a collection which hailed from around the world, was written in a rhetorical style which makes it abundantly clear that the overall aims are proto-nationalist and that the priority was for the collection to be fully accessible, useful and beneficial to all (Anonymous 1753: 14). The aim was to create a "truly universal museum... illustrating the sum of human knowledge, collecting both the natural and artificial products of the whole world" (Caygill 1994: 50) in order to benefit and educate the British people. The storage and display of artefacts, changed from a private affair to a public and even philanthropic act. Private collections and cabinets of curiosity of the very wealthy began to be moved into the public sphere. Whilst there had been a small number of museums in place before the founding of the British Museum, (the private collection that would go on to become the Ashmolean, for example, founded as early as the 1620s (Ovenell 1986: 30)) these were only occasionally open to the general public and by public, this generally meant access was granted solely to the noble and scholarly classes (Waterfield 2003: 5). Although the British Museum was an early example of this trend, by the end of the eighteenth century, similarly motivated collectors had opened their collections to the public in Paris and elsewhere in Europe, displaying an early example of the nationalistic use of the objects of the past (Díaz-Andreu 2007: 62).

These museums were very different from today's incarnations. It was not until 1807 that artefacts were separated from the natural history specimens in the British Museum (Smiles 2003: 176). There was no special focus on Anglo-Saxon artefacts, but many early

medieval manuscripts were included, mostly originating from the Cottonian Library, but also from the Sloane and the Harleian collections (Nickson 1994). The creation of the public museum in the eighteenth century created a greater public emphasis on the social value of the objects of the past, whether prehistoric, Roman or medieval. Some of the earliest collections of Anglo-Saxon artefacts were on display in museums around the country. The Ashmolean Museum at Oxford held the Reverend James Douglas' collection after his death, which had been purchased from his widow by Sir Richard Colt Hoare and donated to the museum in 1829 (MacGregor 2007a), and the Reverend Bryan Faussett was famous for a pavilion in which he displayed the remains excavated from Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and burials. These examples remained relatively few prior to the Victorian period, however, and Anglo-Saxon objects benefited more from the general cultural shift towards conserving and displaying artefacts than by any focused attempt to preserve them.

The eighteenth century was also the era of the Grand Tour, when the upper classes traveled to Europe to view the cathedrals and ruins of the Continent. A carefully planned route through the established tourist destinations (requiring an average of about three years) was undertaken by young men who belonged to a "picked class ... with their aristocratic temper, their wealth, and their insular characteristics" (Mead 1914: 3). The route differed, but the ultimate goal was always Italy, and the ruins and antiquities of Rome (Hibbert 1969: 25). At the end of the eighteenth century, the emphasis shifted to include more British antiquities, presumably due to the almost continual state of war between Britain and France from 1793 until 1815, which severely restricted the possibility of foreign travel (Smiles 1994: 170). Despite this, the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed large numbers of young men from Britain undertaking this highly ritualized early form of tourism. They brought home a deep appreciation for antiquities and monuments and a fervor for the ancient and classical world that changed attitudes to the material past.

Access to antiquities and manuscripts did not however become entirely egalitarian during this time. The leisure time required to visit museums and the ability to take a Grand Tour remained the province of a select few with sufficient finances and connections. What changed in the middle of the eighteenth century was the rhetoric that surrounded the collection and display of these items, bringing them into the public sphere, and the notion of their value not just to the individual collector, but to the country as a whole (Waterfield 2003: 10). This experimental phase of development at the beginning of the

life of the museum was a time when trustees were, in a sense, inventing the modern museum as we know it.

Pagans and Druids in the Eighteenth Century Imagination

During the eighteenth century, an intense area of interest developed around the prehistoric society that had come to be termed the Druids. This was a part of a widespread increase of interest in the Celtic past, both within Britain and in rest of “Celtic” Europe (Collis 2003; Pomian 1996). As Hutton has identified, they had once been marginal figures in the imagination of the Welsh and English, but by 1790 they had become the major authors of the ancient English landscape; “they loomed out of books, strutted in plays, and peeped through shrubbery” (Hutton 2009: 124). This resulted in further confusion regarding the identity of the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxons. The result of this was often a conflation in the description of the religious rites and practices that were attributed to the Anglo-Saxon pagans and the Druids. The Druids represented an historically attested group, described in the classical sources by Caesar, Strabo, Cicero and others, sources that would have been available to the well-educated eighteenth-century gentleman. It has been persuasively argued, however, that they were a construct resultant from a combination of the imagination of the classical authors and the enthusiasm of historians and antiquarians in the eighteenth century (Hutton 2009; Piggott 1968). Archaeologists have long acknowledged the problematic nature of both the textual and physical evidence for the Druids (Kendrick 1927; Piggott 1968), but Hutton’s is the first analysis on the topic that brings the myths and legends to the fore and exposes the historical conditions that led to their creation.

The raw material, as Hutton puts it (2009: 2), that gave rise to the idea of the Druids derives primarily from Julius Caesar’s *De bello gallico*, an account of his conquests and battles in Gaul (Caesar 1980). In it, Caesar describes the religious practitioners of the Gauls as a privileged class called Druids, who had control over public and private sacrifice, and passed down rulings on all religious questions (Caesar 1980: 121). The doctrine of this group of socially important and powerful men was considered to derive from Britain, and the further study of the rites of Druidism could be undertaken by visiting Britain (Caesar 1980: 121). Caesar’s reporting on this subject is cast into doubt by the absence of any reference to the Druids in the section on his conquest of Gaul, and that he never mentions the Druids in his writings on Britain. This paradox has troubled scholars since the end of the nineteenth century when it was first acknowledged by the French historian Fustel de Coulanges in 1891 (de Coulanges 1891 [1994]: 60-1; Hutton

2009: 4). Since all of the writers who came after Caesar based their depiction of the Druids on his account, the question of whether or not there ever was such a thing as a Druid has never been satisfactorily resolved. Nonetheless, they have been studied, discussed and written about for centuries and remain the dominant image for the prehistoric religion in Britain and are still being described and debated in the twenty-first century (see Aldhouse-Green 2010).

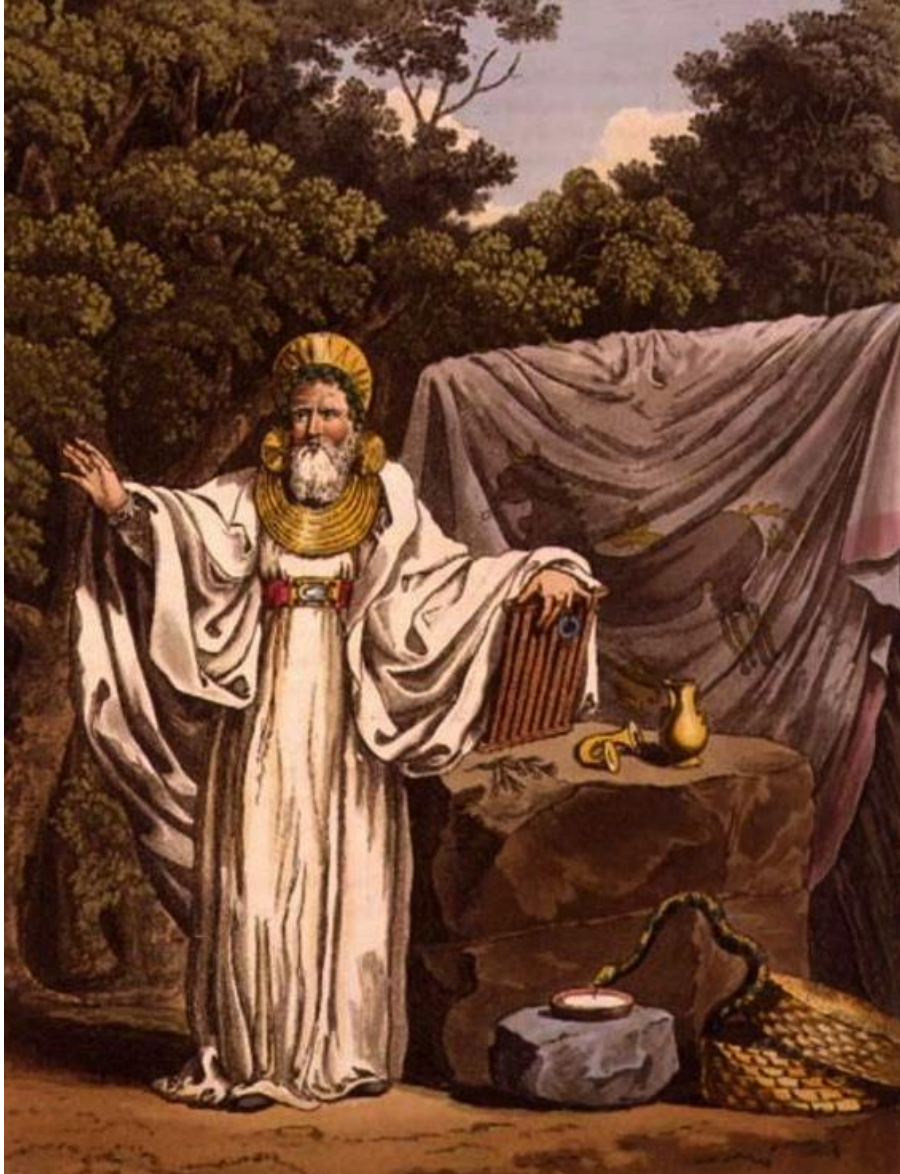


Figure 15: An Arch Druid in his Judicial Dress, Robert Havell 1815 (Meyrick and Smith 1815: pl. x)

The image of the Druid was never more popular than in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A Romantic interest in Celtic culture was one of the driving forces behind this interest. The period after 1745 is well-known for a sharp rise in the importance of the Celt to the slow coalescence of a sense of a unified British identity (Carruthers and Rawes 2003). This can be seen as part of a process in which the English “transformed and appropriated the Celtic in the service of Britishness” (Carruthers and Rawes 2003: 3).

This valorization of a Celtic British identity resulted from the existence of a greater number of classical sources dealing with the Celtic pagan priesthood, which outnumber accounts of their Germanic and Anglo-Saxon counterparts as found in Tacitus' *Germania*. This conflation of the pre-Christian ethnic groups was also a symptom of the political reality of the time. As the Wales, Ireland and Scotland became part of Britain, the various pasts of these areas were being subsumed into the history of the newly unified British identity. The pre-Christian pasts of the various individual identities were melded into a single pre-Christian heathen past, and this allowed for what was known about the Druids to be co-opted by scholars of Anglo-Saxon paganism and used as evidence for their work. To the Christian antiquarian, there was little to distinguish Druids from pagan Anglo-Saxon priests, and the two were often conflated by scholars of the time (Piggott 1968: 143). It is therefore appropriate, for this time period (and this period only), to think about these two separate groups as one, when thinking about the scholarly and artistic representation of paganism during this time.

The lack of evidence for Anglo-Saxon pagan temples, documented but materially absent, created a vacuum which Druidical worship and its monuments began to fill. Anglo-Saxon pagan temples were increasingly described in terms resembling the places of Druidical worship, as seen in the classical sources. The idea of pagan worship situated outdoors in a sacred grove or other similarly romantic natural landscape had its roots in the radical Protestantism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but was now harnessed to Romantic – classically inspired – notions of primitive religion. The romance of Druids led Sir Richard Colt Hoare, in his travel diaries, to identify a site of pagan worship at St David's in Wales thus,

No place could ever be more suited to retirement, contemplation or Druidical mysteries, surrounded by inaccessible rocks and open to a wide expanse of ocean. Nothing seems wanting but the thick impenetrable groves of oaks which have generally been thought concomitant to places of Druidical worship and which, from the exposed nature of this situation, would never, I think, have existed here even in former days (R. C. Hoare 1983: 48)

The pure paganism – seen as a sort proto-Christianity – of the Druids, situated in open air temples, combined with rising nationalism that sought to harness and meld classical and Roman sources with accounts of the Germanic tribes, resulted in a composite ideal of pagan worship which encompassed aspects of all of the various pre-Christian groups.

Colonial interactions with contemporary non-Christian groups led to the further development of the idea of Druids as “noble savages” and added dimensions to the

aggregated idea of paganism. Piggott identified New World encounters with Native Americans as resulting in the development of a primitivism, which led to increased interest in the “primitive” Britons and ultimately led to Stukeley’s interpretation of Stonehenge as a Druidical temple (Piggott 1968: 136-7). It is here that we begin to see the origin of a trope which has endured for centuries in the archaeology of religion, one which can be reduced to the phrase, “all non-Christians are non-Christian in the same way”, in other words, it is neither possible nor important to distinguish between pre-Christian religious practices. It is this idea which has led to the use of ethnographic studies of contemporary non-Christian groups as acceptable evidence for the study of Anglo-Saxon paganism.

Not only did this romanticized view of Druidical worship bleed though into conceptions of Anglo-Saxon paganism, but also into the description of Gothic church architecture:

The origin of all arts is deduced from nature and assuredly the idea of this Arabian arch, and slender pillars, is taken from the groves sacred to religion, of which the great patriarch Abraham was the inventor. The present Westminster abby [sic], and generally our cathedrals, the Temple church, and the like, present us with the true notion of those verdant cathedrals of antiquity; and which our Druids brought from the east to our own island, and practiced before the Romans came hither (Stukeley 1755: 40)

Here Stukeley combined the geographically distant biblical past and the temporally distant Druids to explain the style of what he identifies as a “Roman-Saxon” or Gothic church (Stukeley 1755: 40). In doing so, he ties together many disparate historical threads, as well as some of the ideas of natural theology so prevalent in the Romantic period to create an idea of the church structure as a palimpsest of cultural ideals. Here too we see how the primitive piety of early Christianity was valorized in the likening of the Gothic or Norman arch to the graves and natural places of the Druidical worship (Walsham 2011: 305).

These ideas were pervasive and could be found in many aspects of the culture of the day. In a musical of the 1770s, entitled *The Masque of the Druids*, the Druids evoke the god Woden - “come, shut our temple and away/Woden – our deity, shall stay/We’ll serve no sacrifice today/Our humour is to feast not pray” (Fisher 1775: 17). The Druids were thus portrayed as worshipping an Anglo-Saxon god. The Druids held an important place in the popular culture of the time, as others have argued before, and elements of Norse and Germanic mythology were harnessed to their narratives to create more legitimate and real characters. In essence, any pre-Conversion narrative or source of evidence became relevant to the Druidical discourse.

In his History of the Anglo-Saxons, Sharon Turner writes,

The superstitions of druidism were terrible, but they fell before the gentle spirit of Christian dispensation. As the benignant precepts of this system attracted the adoration of the natives, the class of druids, already wounded by the Roman sword, completely expired, but the principal order, the bards, survived their pagan rites, and a regular succession is declared to have continued, though with many vicissitudes of number and popularity, from the age of Caesar to the present day (Sharon Turner 1799: 194)

The way in which Turner describes the transition between Druid and Christian was a common motif of the time. Druids were, for the eighteenth century scholar, the acceptable face of paganism, wise and otherworldly. Anglo-Saxonism was instead increasingly associated with Christianity and conversion, rendering the Anglo-Saxon a paragon of religious and democratic virtue.

The lack of evidence for pagan religion led to a composite view of paganism which included known aspects of both Druid and Anglo-Saxon religion. This may be a logical progression of the idea that the Augustinian conversion was merely a second step in a process that had already started in the Roman period. The lack of pagan temples or religious objects dating to the Anglo-Saxon period could be explained by the characterization of their religious practice as, like the Druids', an outdoor pursuit, based on natural features such as rocks and oak groves. Not only was this a convenient explanation for the lack of material evidence, but it also suited the eighteenth century Romantic view of religion as natural and based in nature.

The Material Culture of Religious Change

Against this complex background of debate, the antiquarians of the eighteenth century began to explore the material culture of the Anglo-Saxon religious past. Stephen Bann has argued for a history of antiquarianism which is distinct from the history of archaeology (Bann 1990: 110-5). Whilst he is correct in viewing antiquarianism as something much more complex and composed of many more strands, it is nonetheless, the location of the beginning of the strand which later developed into archaeology. This time was characterized by a transition that occurred as antiquarians expanded to embrace another body of evidence for the Anglo-Saxon Conversion. Prior to 1750, methods and antiquarian artefact collections had been developing for decades, but it wasn't until this moment that early medieval religious change began to be considered in the light of the material evidence rather than the limited documentary sources alone.

It is possible to see the work carried out by Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682), the physician and author, in the seventeenth century as a precursor to the development of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In 1658, Browne had first published *Hydriotaphia; or Urne-Burial*, a work which catalogued and described the discovery of several dozen cremation urns which had been uncovered in Norfolk (T. Browne 1893). Although Browne, to some extent, grappled with religious questions (T. Browne 1893: 17), he did not identify the urns as Anglo-Saxon. These finds did not hold any significance for the study of the Conversion, due to Browne's belief in their Roman origin. He was able to identify them as pagan by the fact that they were cremated, but not to date the remains to the Anglo-Saxon period. After Browne's *Hydrotaphia*, it would be nearly a century before antiquarians began to engage with the material culture of the early medieval past. By the second half of the eighteenth century, three key areas of research had developed which impacted on the study of conversion: funerary archaeology, particularly the excavation of Anglo-Saxon burials, the study of standing churches and the attempts to identify pagan temples below the foundations of the early churches.

The recognition and analysis of Anglo-Saxon artefacts more generally also began to flourish during the eighteenth century. Studies of later Anglo-Saxon coins, sculpture and inscriptions and attempts to trace the remains of historical battles were all underway. This was part of the larger shift taking place in the eighteenth century, from generalized topographical studies towards the practice of something that we begin to recognize as archaeology (MacGregor 2003: 164). Samuel Pegge, one of the most prolific members of the Society of Antiquaries of London, covered many topics in the pages of *Archaeologia* and many of his articles were to do with Anglo-Saxon material. He wrote frequently about Anglo-Saxon coins and many articles on Anglo-Saxon and Roman gold, jewelry and jewels (Pegge 1752, 1773a, 1774). The collection of items left by Sir Hans Sloane, which became the basis of the British Museum, included some Anglo-Saxon items, most notably an inscribed ring which is said to have inspired Hickes' translation project (Cherry 1994: 199). These studies and collections reflect a greater recognition of and interest in the antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon period by the antiquarian establishment.

Despite a certain amount of general interest, it would not be until the late 1750s that the Reverend Bryan Faussett (1720-1776), an Oxford-educated vicar (S. C. Hawkes 1990), began to draw the connection between the burgeoning collections of funerary remains and the concept of Conversion. His account of his own excavations, written and circulated at this time, although not published until 1856, shows a remarkable attention to detail, especially in the illustrations of the items recovered from the graves. He also

revealed an early grasp of modern excavation techniques, convincing the labourers to excavate down from the surface rather than in from the side of the bank, a change which was instituted after “a little persuasion and a little brandy (without which nothing, in such cases as the present, can be done effectually)” (Faussett 1856: 2). These excavations were undertaken in the period between 1757 and 1773, latterly with the help of Faussett’s son, Henry, who was an important force in managing the collection after his father’s death (Rhodes 1990).

Although Faussett, like Browne, believed that he had come across the bones of “Romans Britainized or Britains Romanized” (Faussett 1856), he was the first person to have drawn a clear connection between the mode of burial and the creed of the deceased. Not only does Faussett draw attention to every grave that contained a cross, he also began to place emphasis on the orientation of inhumation burials. Burial on an east-west axis was taken as hallmark of a Christian grave, and Faussett carefully recorded all instances where this was not the case (Faussett 1856: 24). Without using the word, he is also one of the first to suggest syncretism in the religious practice of the early Anglo-Saxon Christians. In an attempt to reconcile the graves that contained both crosses and items which he deemed pagan, Faussett wrote:

Indeed, the patera, mentioned at No. 178, and the small urns mentioned in many places in the following inventory, do seem to savour too much of paganism. But then, let it only be supposed (which is by no means unlikely to have been the case) that though they were converts to Christianity, yet that their religion still had a mixture of paganism in it; and then this objection will disappear (Faussett 1856: 39)

The idea that conversion might not have been instantaneous and complete, but rather a complex syncretic process, is one which can be seen in recent work on the topic (see Pluskowski and Patrick 2003 for a discussion), but interestingly, Faussett’s Victorian editor and champion, Charles Roach Smith, dismissed this idea in his commentary on the text (Faussett 1856: 39 footnote). Roach Smith and the Victorian response to Faussett’s work are discussed fully in Chapter Five.

A further important study of the Anglo-Saxon funerary remains was published in 1793 by the geologist and antiquary the Reverend James Douglas (1753-1819), an enthusiastic proponent of the use of material remains to supplement the written record. In his seminal book, *Nenia Britannica*, he wrote, “The inscription or the medal are the only facts which can obviate error, and produce the substitutes for deficiency of antient [sic] records: when these are wanting, in vain will the human mind be gratified by the most acute investigation; incredulity will arise in proportion as the judgment is matured” (J. Douglas

1793: v). He is also an early critic of the “cabinet of curiosities” in which the items are all displayed without context, expressing his dismay at the state of Sir William Fag’s cabinet, in which it was impossible to know which tumulus each artefact had been found in (J. Douglas 1793: 21).

The defining aspect of Douglas’ work is that he was the first to recognize Anglo-Saxon archaeological remains for what they were (Jessup 1975: 177). Faussett’s earlier identification of this type of remains as “Romans-Britonized or Britons-Romanized” stood for many years before the truth became clear. Douglas’ use of the Conversion to define his time periods is key to understanding the emerging importance of the Conversion as a chronological marker during this time. Like Faussett, he was interested in the question of the religious affiliation of the individuals whose graves he excavated. To his mind, the beautifully designed items discovered in the Saxon graves indicated the Christian affiliation of their makers, stating that, “The illiterate Saxons, who were pagans, on their first descent into Britain, had not the art of producing works of such ingenuity as are obviously defined on the fibulae, gems and other costly trinkets, found in these graves” (J. Douglas 1793: 129). This comment conflates literacy, Christianity and art as though these things were inseparable in Douglas’ conception of the Saxon early medieval character. Douglas, unlike Faussett, was inclined to see Christianity as a binary state – either the graves belonged to Christians or they didn’t. Whilst he appears to have been aware that pre-Christian groups had used crosses as symbols, he was convinced that “we should not enter into an enquiry which may possibly lead us into a disquisition too complicated to throw light on the subject, and do injury to the most natural way of accounting for the discovery of them in tombs” (J. Douglas 1793: 68). Content and Williams have argued that this has much to do with Douglas’ disinclination to see the Anglo-Saxons as pagans, of whom he held an extremely low opinion (Content and Williams 2010: 188).

Douglas is credited with having written a short anonymous rhyme to describe his transformation from soldier and antiquarian to parson, which compares the act of digging up graves to the religious act of Christian burial: “An antiquarian & a Soldier Bred/I Damn’d the living & dig’d up the dead/as parson now [my steps I here] retread/I bless the living & Inter the dead” (Marsden and Nurse 2007: 101). If this was indeed written by Douglas, it shows an important connection in the antiquarian mind between disinterring the remains of past peoples and interring their contemporaries. Faussett and Douglas, both ordained in the Anglican Church, have often been seen as the fathers of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, and credit is certainly due to them for their development of the field.

Between them, although perhaps not always entirely consciously, they brought historical, text based ideas about the early medieval inhabitants of England together with the urns and objects found in their excavations and created an entirely new understanding the early medieval period in Britain.

The change in burial practice was mostly seen as an effect of the Conversion on a passive population, but it was also occasionally presented as an active rejection of pagan practice. John Brand, in his *Observations on Popular Antiquities*, a text primarily about the origin of various feasts and festivals in the English calendar, wrote that “The antient Christians, to testify their abhorrence of heathen rites, rejected the pagan custom of burning the dead, depositing the inanimate body entire into the ground” (Brand 1813b: 178). He claimed on this basis to have found the grave “wherein Leland says Paulinus who converted the Northumbrians to Christianity was interred” on Hadrian’s Wall at Rutchester (Brand 1813b: 178). Brand’s *Observations* was unusual in that it was not heavily based on Bede, like so many of the other accounts of the day, but it rather relies on authors such as Leland and Strutt, who based their works on Bede.

Recognition of the earliest standing church fabric and stone sculpture brought with it debate over the authorship of these early monuments. Many writers preferred to attribute their architectural form to the influence of the Roman missionaries, rather than to any British or Germanic inspiration. Some, including the Irish antiquarian Reverend Edward Ledwich (1738-1823), also suggested that this was intentionally designed to appeal to the British populations who,

with great firmness preserved their hierarchy and faith, and resolutely withstood the adoption of masses, stations, litanies, singing, reliques, pilgrimages, and numberless other superstitions and innovations of popery. The Anglo-Saxon church, founded by a Roman, and devoted to that see, could not give more convincing proof of her sincerity than by embracing those favourite ceremonies, and with them that mode of building with which they were intimately connected (Ledwich 1786: 167-8)

Unlike the strong anti-Roman bias evinced by the Reformation scholars, the emphasis here is very much on the two Roman missions, the first, which converted the Britons, and the second, which converted the Anglo-Saxons. Other scholars supported this contention that the Romans were responsible for the early stone churches, including Thomas Pownall, a well known antiquary, who wrote, “...wherever the Christian Missionaries sent from Rome came, they brought with them not only Religion but the mechanick arts, and many sciences, architecture, musick, painting, engraving in silver and copper, and

working glass” (Pownall 1788: 111). These missionaries, he wrote, were, “the restorers of the Roman order of architecture in stone. What buildings were erected by them, and under their direction, have been mistakenly called Saxon architecture” (Pownall 1788: 111).

The historian and Roman Catholic priest John Lingard (1771-1851) produced a book entitled *The Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, which was published first in 1806 and again 1810. Best known for its strong Catholic perspective on the Conversion, this book reads like a fairly standard recitation of Bede’s story of the conversion, including the story of St Gregory and the slave boys and many other details taken directly from the *Ecclesiastical History* (Lingard 1810: 8-9). What makes this text unusual, however, is an endnote of several pages, which describes the types of churches which the Anglo-Saxons were instructed to build by the missionaries (timber by the Irish and stone by the Romans) and provides a standing example of each type (Lingard 1810: 479-80). This is the only aspect of the text which refers to material culture, as Lingard is able to write several pages on Anglo-Saxon coins and their monetary system without referring to the numismatic studies which had been published by other antiquarians and never once discussing the discovery or physical appearance of an Anglo-Saxon coin (Lingard 1810: 462-73). His examples of the types of early churches are the wooden church at Greensted and the stone church at Ramsey, both in Essex (Lingard 1810: 479-80). Of Greensted he says very little, but he goes into some depth about the construction and layout of Ramsey, particularly the purpose and dates of the towers (Lingard 1810: 481). This is a rare example of a historical work utilizing the architectural record as proof or support for a historically attested point.



Figure 16: Greensted Church as it appears today, from www.greenstedchurch.co.uk

In his beautifully and meticulously illustrated guide to British buildings, *The Ancient Architecture of England*, first published in 1795 and reprinted throughout the Victorian period, John Carter (1748-1817) analyzed two sites, which, to his mind, dated to “that epoch when the dawnings of Christianity rose in this country; its converts were then but few, and the places where they assembled must have been in the most sequestered situations: there, probably, the first Christian altars were raised” (Carter 1887: 12). The two sites that he used as examples of this were a cell cut into the rock in Cratcliff in Derbyshire, and a series of caves in Nottingham, both of which suggested to him secluded, simple, monastic Christianity in its early form (Carter 1887: 12-3). There appears to be no other reason to date these sites to the Anglo-Saxon period, as they contain both later medieval architectural features and reused Roman building materials (Carter 1887: 13).

Known as a proto-Puginian (after A.W.N. Pugin, the great Victorian champion of Gothic architecture) for his almost religious devotion to Gothic architecture, Carter saw himself as a champion and defender of the ancient buildings of Britain, fighting against both the problems of progress and the unchristian interest in Classical (and therefore pagan) architectural styles (Crook 1995: 35). As draughtsman to the Society of Antiquaries and an almost evangelical defender of medieval buildings, he is credited with have saved

several cathedrals and churches from “improvements” during his lifetime, including Durham Cathedral (Crook 1995: 35). Although he was passionate and devoted to his subject, he failed to understand the dates of the structures that he studied, resulting in a body of work which misidentifies much of its material (Crook 1995: 42-3). Much of what Carter viewed as Anglo-Saxon architecture was rightly seen by his Victorian editors to be Norman or later (Carter 1887: 12 editor's note), but he put forth an idea of what the early buildings of Conversion might have looked like, which is unique for this period.

The discussion often centered not on the form, fabric or function of the early churches, but on the inscriptions that were present within them, especially on connecting the standing structure with a historically known individual, through the use of the inscriptions. The individuals to whom the churches were dedicated were often the focus of inquiry, frequently to the exclusion of other aspects of the history of a structure. This was the case at the church of Kirkdale, discussed above (Brooke 1777). Kirkdale was dedicated, “it seems, to Gregory the Pope, as was very natural, he being so instrumental in introducing the Christian religion amongst the Saxons in this island” (Brooke 1777: 191). These inscriptions and their historical connections were often the focus of the antiquarian study of churches rather than the buildings themselves.

Despite a nascent movement toward the acquisition, collection and restoration of classical sculpture beginning in the 1760s (Coltman 2009), the sculpture of the Anglo-Saxon period was not yet well understood during this period and it remained an untapped resource for understanding the material of early medieval religion until the mid-nineteenth century. Major Hayman Rooke, a prolific writer on the subject of tumuli and other antiquities, wrote about the Anglo-Saxon stone cross at Bradbourne in Derbyshire in 1793 (Rooke 1796). Like many of his contemporaries, Rooke was not able to recognize the Anglo-Saxon material he had discovered, and identified the carved figures on the cross as Roman fertility goddesses and the cross itself as a Roman piece which had been uncovered during the building of the church (Rooke 1796). John Moreland has viewed this as symptomatic of the time, and contrasted Rooke's interpretation to the strong emphasis placed on the Anglo-Saxon origin of the cross during the nineteenth century, when the connection to the Anglo-Saxon past was more important to antiquarians (Moreland 1999: 200-2). Amongst the few early analyses of Anglo-Saxon sculpture from this period, none utilized the overt religious character of many of the sculptures. They were not yet considered in light of what they could tell scholars about the religious past. In part this is because they were often, like so many other types of Anglo-Saxon material

culture during this period, often misidentified or mis-dated, but also may simply reflect, as in this case, the priorities of the period.

There were occasional discussions of the material culture of religion which did not include the graves and grave goods of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries or the form of early churches. One previously unexplored example appeared as a dialogue printed in *Archaeologia*, the journal of the Society of Antiquaries of London. In 1775, Gustavus Brander, a member of the Society, wrote a short article in the journal regarding the discovery of a quantity of bird bones which he had discovered in a small, stone lined receptacle embedded in the floor of a ruined church that he was investigating in Hampshire (Brander 1775). A wealthy landowner, he had been in the process of preparing an ichnography (a ground plan of a building) of a ruin on his property. Although he does not identify the church as Anglo-Saxon, he does mention that the windows are in the Gothic style, and mentioned that the historical record shows that during King Edward the Confessor's reign, the church supported a community of Augustinian monks, implying an early foundation date (Brander 1775: 118). Brander was unable to account for the bird bones in anyway except to assume that they were the result of a ritual feast of some sort and he concluded, "I think it is not improbable, from a conjecture which this interment has suggested, and seems to warrant, that it had still a much earlier one, having originally been a Pagan Temple, and afterwards converted to Christian uses" (Brander 1775: 118).

Samuel Pegge (1733-1800), one of the Society's most prolific members, presented his response to Brander in the form of a letter to the secretary of the Society. In it, he presents the textual context and support for Brander's supposition, based heavily on the Gregory's letter to St Augustine and Geoffrey of Monmouth, especially the story of Faganus and Duvanus (Pegge 1776: 415-6). He concludes, using these textual sources, that,

Admitting then the custom of converting Heathen temples into Christian churches, it is very natural to suppose in the next place, that the missionaries of that age would, in all common policy, give the least possible offense to their pagan neighbours; on the contrary, that they would incline to shew all respect to their places of worship consistent with the fundamentals and the purity of their own religion that they would do every thing in their power to invite them to embrace the new way of worship, and nothing that might alienate their minds, or exasperate them against it (Pegge 1776: 417)

Although he acknowledges that not all of his contemporaries agree that this was the case, Pegge is convinced that Brander has discovered the remains of a sacrificial feast (Pegge

1776: 418). However, despite the place name evidence, which he admitted points toward an Anglo-Saxon settlement, he ended by concluding that these unusual remains were likely the result of early Roman colonization of the area (Pegge 1776: 419-20).

This episode contains two elements which are germane to this thesis, firstly the idea, which has gone on to gain prominence at various times, that early medieval churches were built on the foundations of pagan temples. Second, the use of the textual sources to explain the archaeological record and the unquestioning way in which the texts are taken as correct. The use, presumably through Bede, of the letters of St Gregory and the of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* exposed the entirely uncritical way that the textual sources were used and the complete trust that this generation of scholars had in the written word.

In 1786, the textual sources were again used to justify the idea that early churches were built on the foundations of pagan temples despite the absence of evidence, in this case by the antiquary Edward Ledwich (1739-1823), who wrote:

That they built temples, which were after converted to Christian churches, has been asserted by learned men. The passages in Bede and other writers, which seem to countenance this opinion, will be found, on a critical examination, to come very short of the necessary evidence, without a large portion of ingenuity and conjecture. But as there is no heathen Saxon temple extant or on record, whose architecture and ornaments are accurately described, there is no need of enquiring minutely on this subject (Ledwich 1786: 166-7)

At this stage, the antiquarians and proto-archaeologists, who had begun to explore the possibilities of a material culture of religious change, and the conventional historians of the Anglo-Saxon period, who studied the textual sources, stood in uncomfortable relation to each other. The antiquarians of the period, such as Faussett and Pegge, were comfortable with the use of the textual sources to support their artefactual discoveries, but the historians had not yet come to see the value of the archaeological record in elucidating the mysteries left by the textual accounts. This may be due in part to the extent to which eighteenth century culture as a whole ridiculed and demeaned the antiquarian (Lolla 1997; Scalia 2007) and, as explored above, the dismissal by historians of the antiquarians as irrelevant to society, unlike historians (Bolingbroke 1792).

Parallel to the new examples of material culture studies, the text-based history of the Conversion continued in a similar pattern as had been seen in the previous century and a half. Joseph Strutt (1749-1802), antiquary and costume historian, who wrote a chronicle

of the history of England from the Romans to the Normans, admits in his chapter on the religion of the pagan Anglo-Saxons that little is known of their practice or practitioners. Citing Bede, he writes, "The Saxons who came over to Britain, were not only Heathens themselves, but they conceived an inveterate hatred against the Christian religion" (Strutt 1779: 216). Although he lacked evidence to back up this claim, it suits his characterization of the Britons as innocent victims of the heathen Anglo-Saxons from across the sea. Here again we see the story of St Gregory the Great and the slave boys in the market, although Strutt appears less convinced than some of his predecessors and prefers to think that perhaps Berta, the Christian queen of Kent may have called his attention to the need for missionary action in England by writing him letters (Strutt 1779: 217).

The Use of Previous Scholarship

Many scholars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries rejected the histories of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which they viewed as biased and imperfect, preferring instead to refer back to the medieval textual sources. In his preface, John Lingard wrote, "My object is truth: and in the pursuit of truth, I have made it my religious duty to consult the original historians" (Lingard 1810: iv). A Catholic, Lingard was writing in some part to contradict the Reformation histories by returning to the early medieval texts, and refusing, as he writes, to "pollute these pages with the abuse, which, about two centuries ago, religious bigotry so lavishly bestowed on the apostles of the Saxons. If the reader's taste lead him to such offal, he may peruse the works of Bayle, of Parker, and of Fox" (Lingard 1810: 28). Although Lingard's view was more strongly expressed, this feeling about pre-Enlightenment historical analysis seems to have been shared by many of his contemporaries.

Generally, few sixteenth or seventeenth century texts are mentioned, and with the exception of some of the translations of Anglo-Saxon texts undertaken by Hickes and the Elstobs in the early part of the eighteenth century, the antiquarians of this period seem not to have used much of the work of the earlier historians. The exceptions are the great chorographical narrative of Leland, and Camden's *Remains Concerning Britain* of 1695, both books which were frequently consulted. The latter book had been edited and reprinted in 1722 by Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, and it formed an important framework for the work which came after it. Was it perhaps because these books dealt with material evidence that they continued to be trusted sources after all of the text-

based histories had been discounted? It seems likely that they may have been seen to stand on firmer epistemological ground.

In the late eighteenth century we see the early adoption of some of the scholarly commonplaces, still in use today. For example, Richard Gough's 1780 *British Topography* provides in its preface a literature review of British history in a style which we would recognize as comprehensive to this day (Gough 1780: i-xlvi) and the same for his overview of ecclesiastical topography, which includes an entire chapter of review and critique of the previous authors on the subject (Gough 1780: 114-31). Gough's interest was in describing and mapping the country and so the ecclesiastical history was focused on authors who wrote about the origin and histories of standing ancient churches. Beyond its continued usefulness as resource, this early historiographical work demonstrates clearly which texts were available, accessible and in use by the 1780s and therefore probably provide the background for many of the other texts in which they were used but not cited. Gough begins with Bede, stating that he was "better qualified to write an ecclesiastical history, than a geographical description of England" (Gough 1780: ii) before going on to provide an annotated list (which crucially included information about where rare manuscripts were located) of each subsequent author who had written about Britain and their works. It must be noted however that Gough held antiquarians in contempt, describing them as "men of uncultivated minds, fit only to pore over musty records, and grovel among ruined walls; shut up in closets from the commerce of life, and secluded from information even in their own way" (Gough 1780: xxii). This, as we have seen above, was a common sentiment for the time, but in this case led to the exclusion of antiquarian material from an otherwise comprehensive collection.

The general attitude during this period appears to have been a rejection of the Reformation studies in favour of the ancient texts themselves. It was not yet commonplace to produce a full bibliography of sources used, but we do find that scholars began to footnote their text more consistently and to be more explicit about where their information is coming from in these decades. Thus for the first time we can identify the texts that were used by the antiquarians at this time. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* is frequently referenced, as is William of Malmesbury's *Historia*. On the subject of the early paganism, the work of Gildas was commonly cited, as was the work of Tacitus. We have seen above that the Enlightenment emphasis on empirical history had left the eighteenth century scholars with a distrust of their predecessors, who they saw as biased and religiously motivated. At the same time, as Lolla has described, the antiquarian attitude

towards the ancient texts was one where the process of translation and editing often meant substantial changes to the original (Lolla 1997: 120-22). She stated that,

Prompted by a variety of motives, modernized, improved, corrected, and emended editions, did not treat received texts as monuments to be appreciated in their difference; material stable objects to be preserved and contemplated with a timorous reverence. Quite the contrary. A text from an earlier period was not to be other, mysterious, difficult or intimidating, but rendered innocuous by translation and correction (Lolla 1997: 135)

Although modern sensibilities may see this as a misuse of the ancient texts, it is important to appreciate the difference that this made in the accessibility of many of these books. In fact, it is possible to see the explosion in printed editions of the key texts during this period as an important factor in encouraging the very large and very rapid increase in the amount of interest in the Anglo-Saxon period which occurred in the following century.

Conclusion

Whilst Victorian Anglo-Saxonism is renowned for its potent polemic and nearly obsessive quality, the aim of this chapter has been to show that the eighteenth-century conception of the Anglo-Saxon past laid the foundations for the nineteenth-century zeal. It was during this time that the archaeological investigation of the remains of pagan and early Christian groups began, with a significant focus upon funerary remains. Although historians continued to publish recapitulations of Bede indistinguishable from the chronicles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the scholarly tide had begun to turn and the material culture of conversion was becoming an important aspect of the study of the period. Without the efforts of Bryan Faussett and James Douglas, it would not have been possible to study the Conversion except through the texts, and their groundbreaking studies are important for providing a point of access into the material of religious change in the early medieval period. Increasing interest in the standing church structures and stone sculpture of the period, although less integrated into the large scale historical debates, provided a foundation for later key studies which took a less funerary-centred approach. Romanticism, with its emphasis on patrimony and history, and its interest in primitive religion, provided fertile ground in which the roots of Anglo-Saxonism could take hold, only to flower into a full-blown fervor in the nineteenth century.

The following two chapters explore the Victorian period from 1830 to the World Wars, exposing the florescence of Anglo-Saxonism and the increase of knowledge and interest

in the Conversion which came about during this period, followed by the politically motivated rejection of the Germanic past. The century which followed Queen Victoria's ascension to the throne in 1837 saw unprecedented development in the field of Anglo-Saxon studies and this period has often been the focus of scholars of the historiography of Anglo-Saxon scholarship (see Chapter One). This chapter has argued that the phenomenon of Victorian Anglo-Saxonism and scholarship of the Conversion which took place during that period could not have come about without the work of the eighteenth-century antiquarians who began to see that religious affiliation could be determined by the nature of the burial and the artefacts left behind, an idea which had previously been neither accepted or necessary. The Enlightened emphasis on historical epistemology and the Romantic view of ruins combined to produce the perfect environment for the creation of, for the first time, an archaeology of conversion, and of early medieval religion in Britain.

The English archaeologist can select no worthier course of study than that which directs him to the history of those from whom he inherits not only his material existence and the language he speaks, but also many of the civil and political institutions under which he lives in freedom, and surrounded with advantages and privileges unknown to many nations and countries (Charles Roach Smith in Faussett 1856: ix).

Chapter 5: The Early Victorian Period 1830-1880

Thomas Wright described the 1844 meeting of the newly formed British Archaeological Association, held in Canterbury, thus:

The business was opened on Monday, the 9th of September, with a judicious speech by the zealous and active president of the meeting, Lord Albert Conyngham; and during the week which followed, the Townhall (which had more frequently been the scene of municipal or political contention) was occupied almost daily with the peaceful discussion of subjects in which, for once, all differences of station or party were softened down before the humanising influence of science. The assembly of persons of both sexes was numerous ... many interesting papers were read and discussed; drawings and antiquities of various kinds were exhibited in great abundance; and on the whole, an impression was made both on the visitors and the visited, which it will take years to wear off (T. Wright 1845: 2).

By 1844, therefore, archaeology had become something that could command large crowds and week-long meetings. It had become part of the great Victorian drive toward science and progress, and it could be seen (however optimistically) to be a democratizing force which allowed people to transcend boundaries of class and politics. John Yonge Akerman, the antiquary and Anglo-Saxonist, prefaced one of his volumes by celebrating the fact that antiquarian pursuits were no longer the target of ridicule, but rather had become the subject of general interest (Akerman 1847: v). Antiquarianism in general, and Anglo-Saxon studies specifically, benefited from this large-scale social change in the way that the study of the material of the past was valued.

Chris Brooks has identified a specifically nineteenth-century historicism that developed in the Georgian and early Victorian periods comprised of three key characteristics. First, an emphasis on narratives of causation and on the telling of stories that explain both why the past happened as it did and therefore also explain the present; second, a desire to compare and contrast the past and the present; and third, a newfound fascination with measuring and recording the material remains of the past, often with the view towards a stylistic revival (C. Brooks 1998: 6). All three of these characteristics can be clearly seen

in the attitudes toward the Anglo-Saxon past found in the nineteenth century, and together these three elements form the basis for nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon archaeology. In all of the published accounts discussed and analyzed below, a clear emphasis can be discerned on creating a narrative of the past that could be compared to the present and, in many of them, evidence is drawn from the material, physical, measurable world.

Much has been written about the nature of Victorian Anglo-Saxonism and it has often been cited as the point of origin for all subsequent studies of the period. Whilst the previous chapters have shown that the roots of interest in the Anglo-Saxons lie much earlier, an undeniable shift occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century. This change altered the discourse so radically that it has distorted the way we view not only what came after, but also that which came before it. The historian Colin Kidd has argued that although the roots of interest in British Teutonic origins lie in the seventh and eighteenth centuries, nineteenth century concerns of racial superiority changed the nature of the relationship between the English and the Anglo-Saxon past (Kidd 1999: 212). This fervour, Kidd stated, has led to a relatively poor contemporary understanding of early modern conceptions of the Anglo-Saxon origins of the English, which have been overshadowed and, to some degree, tainted by our knowledge of the Victorian mania (Kidd 1999: 212). The ideas, espoused by the nineteenth-century antiquarians, of English exceptionalism and superiority were new to the Victorian period, and were an important part of what makes this period stand out from the one before.

Against a background of an increasingly formalized methodology of archaeology and an unparalleled nationalist and racist interest in the Anglo-Saxon past, the archaeology of the Conversion transitioned during the Victorian period and became something more complex and culturally laden than it had ever been previously. This chapter aims to explore the period between 1830 and 1882, and the shift in the nature of the study of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion that occurred during that time. Although the nineteenth century is more often studied as a whole, the changes in the understanding of the Anglo-Saxon past, which distinguish this period from the one before, did not begin to take place until the 1830s. This chapter covers the first 40 years of the reign of Queen Victoria and ends with the adoption of the first Ancient Monuments Act, a piece of legislation that changed the role of the archaeologist, and the archaeological monument, in society once again.

For the members of the newly formed British Archaeological Association at their first meeting in 1844, the Conversion was a convenient temporal boundary, allowing them to define the first of their four sections or subgroups as being occupied with the “primeval antiquities of our island, under which title were included all monuments (British, Roman, or Saxon) of a date anterior to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity” (T. Wright 1845: 2). In practice this section covered the archaeology of a huge temporal and geographical span, including supervising the opening of an Egyptian mummy at the meeting (T. Wright 1845: 2). It was the Conversion that distinguished them from the second section, which was concerned with the archaeology of the medieval period and their interest in the contents of barrows (not to mention mummies) which distinguished them from the third and fourth sections, whose interest lay in architecture and history respectively (T. Wright 1845: 2-3).

The Development of Archaeology in Victorian England

The archaeologists of the Victorian period were anxious to distinguish themselves from their antiquarian predecessors and from the time when, “conjecture was common, facts few, and principles but little understood” (Hume 1863: v). Archaeology had become caught up in the scientific mania of the day, and sought to legitimize itself through the establishment of methods, facts and principles in line with the natural sciences. The popularity of archaeology as “one of the eyes of history” (Hume 1863: v) can be traced to the increasing concern, throughout the nineteenth century, with the importance of evidence and proof. As Bateman claimed for his study of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon grave mounds, “...theory, the bane of nearly all the older antiquarian books, has been avoided, and the very few deductions I have ventured to make from recorded facts are either demonstrable, or such as may be fairly inferred” (Bateman 1861: vi). A pervasive shift in the conception of evidence took place during the Victorian period, touching many different aspects of society, including the courts of law, medical research and scientific claims (C. Allen 1997). The standards of proof altered in the nineteenth century and the nature of evidence therefore changed as well. Archaeology appealed to the Victorian mind because it presented solid physical, material evidence that could be judged by the newly higher standards of what constituted acceptable evidence from which to make a serious claim. Past research was seen as useless, in part because objects were studied in isolation and not as part of a large-scale corpus, but mostly because the scholarship lacked the inductive, scientific reasoning that was required by the nineteenth-century mind (T. Wright 1854: 4).

The process of archaeological fieldwork also changed substantially during this period, perhaps in part because of the increased emphasis on obtaining reliable evidence. New manuals described how students of archaeology were obliged to “examine, to collect, to classify, to analyse early remains, with the view to either elicit from them fresh facts as new elements of knowledge, or to adduce, through instrumentality, fresh evidence which may corroborate and elucidate facts already known” (Boutell 1858: 3). These field guides did not offer information on excavation or survey techniques but were rather classification guides, to allow for the identification in the field of an Anglo-Norman church or a Roman brick (Boutell 1858; Godwin 1867). They were intended to be taken into the field by archaeologists, but also to be used by historians and even tourists, to identify ruins and remains that were visible in the landscape (Godwin 1867: vii).

The nineteenth century was a time of great change in how the prehistoric past was understood by both geologists and antiquarians. The advances that were made in understanding the age of the earth and the nature of stratigraphy changed the way that it was possible to think about the past. It was during the nineteenth century that the problems of following a biblical chronology, which had been an obstacle for the eighteenth century antiquarians, began to be resolved (van Riper 1993: 3). The nineteenth century saw the gradual relinquishment of the idea that human life was 6,000 years old, as Bishop James Ussher had calculated using the biblical genealogies (van Riper 1993: 5-6). By 1860, the majority of scholars had taken up the idea that the human past was much longer than had been previously assumed (Grayson 1983: 195). In challenging this widely-held and culturally important idea of human recency, the scholars of the nineteenth century were also challenging the idea that God had made the earth for them, a belief that was held dear by many (van Riper 1993: 5).

The advances made in prehistoric archaeology were international in scope and included many European and especially Scandinavian scholars, but English geologists and archaeologists also contributed to the subject and were relatively quick to realize the implications for their work (O'Connor 2007). Whilst the temporal sequence of English prehistory remained somewhat unclear, and prehistoric artefacts were still often attributed much later dates than we would assign them now (see T. Wright 1861: 6) advances in the understanding of geology and Darwinian principles were beginning to expand the possible time-scale outside of Bishop Ussher's calculated period. In Denmark, the three age system was devised by Christian Jürgensen Thomsen, the curator of the Danish national museum in Copenhagen, who divided the past into the stone-, bronze- and iron-ages (Díaz-Andreu 2007: 326). Rejected by some within Britain (T. Wright

1861: 20-1), this chronological division was nonetheless extremely influential in Europe. English archaeologists were initially reluctant to accept the Three-Age system, and the implied emphasis on the pre-Roman past (Rowley-Conwy 2007: 82). The idea of prehistory was more useful to archaeologists from Wales, Scotland and Ireland, for whom the pre-Roman past was a part of their origin story (Rowley-Conwy 2007: 82). Henry Godwin's *English Archaeologist's Handbook* of 1867, for example, dismissed all of British prehistory by noting that the whole matter was too full of uncertainty and controversy to be given more than passing notice (Godwin 1867: 1). Godwin's *Handbook* included only two pages on the prehistoric remains that may have been encountered by his intended audience of interested amateurs.

Roman archaeology within Britain changed too during this time, providing for some an alternate origin myth to that of the dominant Teutonic narrative (Hingley 2000: 63). Increased interest in the English past during the nineteenth century ran parallel to a continuing concern with the antiquities of the Classical world. Many Greek and Roman sites had long been on the itinerary for the Grand Tours of the upper classes (Díaz-Andreu 2007: 44-5) and during the nineteenth century many antiquities from these sites were increasingly acquired for British, French and German museums. High profile excavations such as Schliemann's excavation of Hisarlik in the 1870s changed the public perception of Classical studies from a discipline dedicated to texts and standing remains to a more holistic perspective that included the archaeological remains. Although the focus of this thesis, and therefore this chapter, is on Anglo-Saxon remains within Britain, it is important to note that these were studied alongside the Greek and Roman objects of the Classical past.

There was more disciplinary separation during this period than there had been in the eighteenth century, but it is not yet appropriate to think of prehistoric, classical and historical archaeology as though they were distinct disciplines. Many of the important nineteenth-century scholars of the Anglo-Saxon period discussed below, were also involved in the study of a multitude of other periods and geographies. In fact, although the lines of enquiry were coming into focus, the division of archaeology from history, philology, ethnography and geology was not fully achieved until much later. Philippa Levine has shown that, as late as 1899, antiquarians and archaeologists, at least, were seen as one and the same (Levine 1986: 31).

There was a new movement during this period to assess the written sources for their value as evidence and this cast into doubt the long-standing reliance on many of the

textual sources for the period. In his book, *The English and their Origins*, published in 1866, Luke Owen Pike was quick to discard all sources but Gildas for what is now called the Migration Period, and call into question Gildas' impartiality and even mental health, writing that "the author's mind was in an unhealthy condition...all happiness and goodness seemed to have departed from the world; and nothing remained but blank despair for himself and all people. In short he was melancholy-mad" (Pike 1866: 25). What was required, therefore, was a modern, scientific method for understanding the past. This niche was filled by archaeology, ethnography and philology.

The nineteenth century was the heyday of the societies and clubs that were set up to provide a place for the increasing interest in the local and national past (Hudson 1981: 15). A study of the Sussex Archaeological Society, founded in 1845, showed that it had 90 members within three weeks and had more than 200 members within two years (Manley 1999: 106, 08). Linda Ebbatson has studied the demographics of the members of the Royal Archaeological Institute in 1845, after it split off from the British Archaeological Association. In that year there were nearly 1,500 members, many of whom were either very wealthy or highly educated, or both (Ebbatson 1994: 23). In that year, 34.9% of the members were employed in the clergy, and approximately 50% were located in London and the South East (Ebbatson 1994: 25-6). Only one woman, Anglo-Saxon scholar Anna Gurney, was listed as a member, but several others subscribed and the numbers were to rise dramatically by the beginning of the twentieth century (Ebbatson 1994: 34). This is a common trend amongst the various societies during the Victorian period; the Society of Antiquaries of London increased restrictions on the participation of women in 1837, which were not lifted until the late nineteenth century (Catalani and Pearce 2006: 272). These demographic trends have been shown to have been generally true of the majority of antiquarian societies of the period by Philippa Levine (1986: 8-9), who also showed that in local societies generally there was a wide range of types of professions involved, for example, the number of clergymen varied from a mere 7% in London to 77% in Northamptonshire (Levine 1986: 184-5).

An important development that occurred at the beginning of the Victorian Period was the burgeoning number of printing clubs, which produced and sold editions of ancient manuscripts at the demand of the subscribers. These clubs consisted of members who voluntarily grouped together as subscribers, thus guaranteeing the successful publication and circulation of works (Wetherall 1998). This allowed unprecedented access to texts that had previously been available only to a very select few. Access to many of the Anglo-Saxon texts was provided by the Early English Text Society, founded in 1864 by

Frederick J. Furnivall (1825-1915) (Lapidge 2002: 3). Furnivall was also an key player in the creation of the *New English Dictionary*, a collaborative effort by several scholars, under the auspices of the Philological Society (Lapidge 2002: 3). The ease of access to ancient texts that resulted from the work of this and other societies was an important step in the development of Anglo-Saxon history.

In Britain, the birth of the railways is often seen as having had an important role in the creation of archaeology (Ashbee 1972: 57; Piggott 1976). Hudson has emphasized both the newfound ability of individual antiquarians to travel to London for the meetings of national societies, but also the excursions that became possible for the members of the local societies (Hudson 1981: 44). Not only did they allow for relatively easy travel throughout the country, it was their construction that had uncovered many of the archaeological materials that the newly mobile middle classes went out to visit (Ashbee 1972: 57). Inspired, perhaps, by the “sheer intolerable boredom of the winter in country house or rectory, parsonage or gentleman’s place” (Piggott 1976: 188), both nineteenth-century archaeology and ecclesiology owe much to the ease with which it had become possible to get to sites and churches throughout Britain.

Although they had ceased to be mocked so commonly or so publicly, many Victorian archaeologists and antiquarians recognized a lack of public enthusiasm for their work, particularly on British antiquities. In the early nineteenth century, there remained a sense that the remains of the classical civilizations, even those found outside of Britain, held a more important place in historical scholarship (Díaz-Andreu 2007: 317). William Wylie looked forward to the day when “public feeling wakes in England, as in Denmark, to a sense of the honour and importance of claiming and preserving national monument as national treasures. Till then, they are safer in the secret guardianship of the conservative earth” (Wylie 1852: 37). Charles Roach Smith, editor of Faussett’s *Inventorium Sepulchrale*, wrote feelingly of the use of governmental funds to purchase foreign antiquities whilst the Anglo-Saxon remains were appreciated by only the antiquarian and the historian and many had been melted down rather than preserved (Roach Smith 1852: 156). He is likely here to have been referring to the fact that the British Museum declined to purchase the Faussett collection when it was given the chance, and that collection’s purchase by Joseph Mayer and subsequent donation to the Museum of Liverpool (R. H. White 1988: 120). The British Museum founded its Department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography in 1866, which lessened the tension (MacGregor 1998: 136) and reflected a change in the amount of emphasis placed on the English post-Roman past.

Mayer's contribution to the preservation of Anglo-Saxon remains in the nineteenth century was key to the development of museums in which to display British nationalist archaeology. Prior to 1850, the museums of Denmark, Germany and France had all outstripped the British Museum, which had no gallery specifically for British material until that date (R. H. White 1988: 119). Mayer's funding was also behind many of the important publications of British material culture in the nineteenth century, although Charles Roach Smith's 1856 edition of *Faussett*, illustrated by Charles Fairholt, is the most well-known (R. H. White 1988: 120). He was an impassioned proponent of the study of British material culture, so much so that he was taken in by several forgeries (R. H. White 1988: 131). He was however successful in preserving some of the most important collections of Anglo-Saxon objects from being broken up or sent abroad.



Figure 17: Fairholt's Illustration of the Kingston Brooch, excavated by Faussett in Kent (Faussett 1856: 29)

Cabinets of curiosity, which had already begun to be criticized in the eighteenth century, were completely dismissed as a mode of displaying artefacts during this period. Context was emphasized and artefacts began to be displayed "according to the peoples and tribes to whom they are known or believed to have belonged, and to the localities in which they are found, and then only have they any intelligible meaning" (T. Wright 1861: 11). Although collections were still likely to contain the material from many different periods and places, more systematic classification systems were beginning to be used. The published catalogue of Thomas Bateman's personal museum shows the British antiquities

sorted by period and type, and the foreign objects divided by their country of origin (Bateman 1855: viii).

Although it was not passed until 1882, the Ancient Monuments Protection Bill was first put forward in 1873 and then reintroduced no less than eight times before it was finally passed and given royal assent (T. Murray 1989: 162). Ultimately this first incarnation of the law did not go far enough in guarding ancient monuments and was not particularly successful, but it sparked a series of legal provisions for the protection of antiquities which can still be seen in effect today. Prior to the passage of this law, public and governmental concern was purely with antiquities from overseas, whilst British archaeology was “a matter for private owners, private societies, and private concern” (Chippindale 1983: 3). This is in contrast to the general trend in Europe at the time, which had seen every country adopt legislation to protect antiquities in the decades following 1860 (Miele 2000: 211). The Ancient Monuments Act brought British archaeological remains into the public and governmental sphere; however ineffectual the eventual law turned out to be, its passage must be seen as a reflection of the need for preservation. It is in part the implications of this law that separates this period from the one that followed.

In summary, the period from 1830 to 1880 was one of important transitions and equally meaningful continuities in the field of archaeology. Changing understandings of the age of the earth and, therefore, the prehistoric past, were enlarging the field of archaeology, whilst an ongoing interest in the Classical past continued to play a key role. Local, regional and national societies were expanding and as archaeologists and historians in Britain became more focused on the writing of a national origin story, Anglo-Saxon material culture became increasingly important.

Victorian Anglo-Saxonism

The Victorian understanding of the Anglo-Saxon past has been frequently explored in the literature (MacDougall 1982: 31). During the Victorian period, perhaps more than at any other time, the Anglo-Saxon past was seen as the direct and very personal history of the English nation, and unlike in previous centuries, the interest in that past was non-partisan and all-consuming (P. Hill 2006: 143). In his preface to *The Saxons in England*, John Mitchell Kemble wrote that the subject was “a grave and solemn one: it is the history of the childhood of our own age, - the explanation of its manhood” (Kemble 1849b: v). It appealed to the Victorian notion of progress to see the Anglo-Saxons as their predecessors, whose values and institutions continued to be refined into the

nineteenth century and beyond. The main focus, therefore, of the Victorian Anglo-Saxon scholar was not religious change but population change; understanding the early medieval migration was of the highest priority. Using textual, skeletal and artefactual evidence, they attempted to answer the question “Who were the Saxons, Angles and Jutes? When and whence did they come? and to what extent did they modify or displace the previous population of [...] Britain?” (Beddoe 1885 [1971]: 38). As a result of the fact that the only material that could be dated to the fifth and sixth centuries appeared to resemble continental examples and they were unable to recognize the material culture of the native British population from this time period, the assumption during the nineteenth century was generally that the Anglo-Saxon invasions had completely destroyed any existing populations and replaced them with Germanic groups (Lucy 2002: 147).

The idea of the “Norman Yoke”, or the oppressive nature of the Conquest and its aftermath (see Chapter One for a full discussion), which had begun to be challenged in the 1820s, still pervaded much of the historical literature of the time (Briggs 1966: 5-6). For the historians and antiquarians of this period, the feudal system put into place by the Norman invaders had damaged (although, crucially, not destroyed) the freedom and democracy that the English had enjoyed during the Saxon period (Briggs 1966: 6). Norman influence on contemporary culture was therefore de-emphasized, and the Anglo-Saxon past was brought to the fore, encouraging the whole population to view the origins of their society and institutions exclusively in the Anglo-Saxon past. Historical scholarship in Britain continued to emphasize importance of an exclusively German origin until at least the 1870s, when the unification of Germany made this notion increasingly difficult to reconcile with contemporary political realities (Poliakov 1996[1971]: 52).

Artistic representations of Anglo-Saxon subjects were increasingly common during this time. The Victorian period saw increasing use of paintings and drawings to explain the past in the present. Mark Redknap has argued that this was an attempt to make sense of the increasingly rapidly changing world (Redknap 2002: 7). Frequently drawing their themes from eighteenth-century understandings of the Anglo-Saxon past, nineteenth-century painters and sculptors depicted Alfred the Great, St Cuthbert, Athelstan and especially St Augustine with increasing regularity (P. Hill 2006: 136). In the 1840s a competition was staged to determine the design for the frescos which would decorate the new Houses of Parliament, and the entrants were encouraged to pick from historical themes (P. Hill 2006: 140) or prehistoric motifs (T. Champion 2001: 452). Twenty of the paintings were about Anglo-Saxon subjects, and of those 11 were based on the

conversion to Christianity and many of the others depicted King Alfred (P. Hill 2006: 140). The painter John Callcott Horsley (1817-1903) painted one of the successful entries to the competition, which represents King Ethelbert seated on a throne in front of a trilithon (possibly from Stonehenge) whilst St Augustine evangelizes and Queen Bertha looks on expectantly. This image shows not only the degree to which the idea of the Augustinian Mission had captured the public imagination, but also extent to which a composite idea of paganism, made up of Anglo-Saxon and prehistoric aspects, still defined the nineteenth-century idea of the pre-Christian period.



Figure 18: St Augustine Preaching to Ethelbert and Bertha, J.C. Horsley, Exhibited in Westminster Hall in 1843.

In 1868, the sculptor William Theed the Younger produced a likeness of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in Anglo-Saxon dress, a piece which now stands in their mausoleum, with a copy in the National Portrait Gallery. Queen Victoria is shown looking adoringly up at her husband, both dressed in a Victorian approximation of Anglo-Saxon clothing and at Prince Albert's feet rests an Anglo-Saxon sword. Without the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquarian excavations of early medieval burials, this representation would not have been possible, because it was from those excavations that an understanding of the dress and weaponry of the Anglo-Saxons had developed. By representing themselves in this way, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were not only emphasizing their connection to the Germanic past, but also taking part in a wider

cultural and artistic movement. The pervasive Victorian ideal of the Anglo-Saxon past was also present in the literature of the day, for both adults and children, and in the poetry (P. Hill 2006: 142-7).



Figure 19: Victoria and Albert in Anglo-Saxon dress, by William Theed 1868

In 1869, Edward Augustus Freeman (1823-1892) published a book entitled *Old English History for Children* which he had originally written for his own family and in which he presented many of the common nineteenth century conceptions of the Anglo-Saxon past, namely the unbroken line between their Anglo-Saxon ancestors and themselves. Perhaps because it was written for children, it makes explicit much of what was only implied in books for adults. Old English should never be called Saxon or Anglo-Saxon, he wrote, because this gave people the erroneous idea that it was somehow different from English (Freeman 1869: xii) and he made it clear that both he and his young readers belong to the Teutonic race (Freeman 1869: 22): “In the old days ...our forefathers then lived in other lands, and had not yet come to the land where we now live; but there was an England even then, namely the land in which Englishmen then lived” (Freeman 1869: 1). The

ideas presented to young readers by Freeman were a simplification of the ideas shared by the scholars of the day, and this text, which was reprinted in several editions, may have influenced the subsequent generation of scholars, although that is impossible to prove. Freeman's text also included an entire chapter devoted to the Conversion, including a simplified re-telling of the story of Gregory and the slave boys, and the story of Edwin in its entirety (Freeman 1869: 42-62). If the main thrust of this book is to teach children that they were descended from Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic forefathers, this chapter seems to be intended to teach them that they are also descended from early medieval *Christians*. His material comes from Bede, and yet he was careful to stress repeatedly that Bede was not alive when the conversion took place and is therefore perhaps not a completely trustworthy source (Freeman 1869: 43, 50).

Freeman took the same position in his academic writing, arguing against what he saw an exclusive interest in the Classical past and for the study of the Anglo-Saxon period.

We have at last awaked to the fact that Greece and Rome do not exhaust the world's stock of wisdom and greatness...the soil of Teutonic Christendom has brought forth as deep and enduring systems, as glorious works of art and genius, as mighty deeds of national and individual greatness, as ought that southern heathendom can boast (Freeman 1849: 13)

Although the emphasis of recent analyses of Victorian Anglo-Saxonism has often been on the nationalist implications of this type of statement, it is clear that this is not a simple case of placing the origin of the English into the Teutonic past, but more specifically in the Teutonic Christian past, defined in opposition to the pagan Classical past.

The emphasis on Gothic architecture that came about during this period was strongly influenced by the work of a single man who was almost fanatically committed to Anglo-Saxon church buildings. Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852) was a convert to the Roman Catholic Church, an architect and a passionate defender of Gothic church architecture. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Pugin was not motivated by nationalistic aims, but rather by a desire to reunite a pan-Catholic Europe through a shared architectural past (Wedgwood 2000: 93). He wrote a scathing attack on the Protestant architects who designed churches, stating in no uncertain terms that "... everything glorious about English churches is Catholic, everything debased and hideous, Protestant" (Pugin 1836: 51). For Pugin, the Neo-Classical style of the previous centuries had been tantamount to modern paganism and was the direct result of the "decayed state of faith throughout Europe in the fifteenth century which led men to dislike, and ultimately forsake, the principles and architecture which originated in the self-denying

Catholic principle, and admire and adopt the luxurious styles of ancient paganism” (Pugin 1836: iii). Pugin’s rather extreme viewpoint led him to accuse Protestant church artists of choosing subjects for their art which “afforded a better scope for the introduction of pagan nudities” (Pugin 1836: 8). Pugin imbued architecture with an almost unbelievable amount of spiritual and religious judgment, purporting to show that early church architecture with pointed arches was not only better constructed but also more Christian and pious. He compared the forms of classic architecture to medieval churches thus:

The Greeks erected their columns like the uprights of Stonehenge, just so far apart that the blocks they laid upon them would not break by their own weight. The Christian architects, on the contrary, during the dark ages, with stone scarcely larger than ordinary bricks, threw their lofty vaults from slender pillars across a vast intermediate space... (Pugin 1841: 3)

The process of translation explored in the previous chapter in which the ancient texts were brought into line with antiquarian expectations (Lolla 1997) began to spread to the conservation of medieval churches. Restoration of the ancient churches was conducted widely, as “to the nineteenth century eye, restorations and reconstructions, far from destroying the authenticity of a medieval building, actually enhanced it” (Miele 1998: 103). Restoration was not the only aim of these projects; enlarging and improving the existing Anglican churches was a project which had as its ultimate goal to entice poorer parishioners away from new sects and secular entertainment in the music halls and into the pews (Miele 1995: 166). For E. A. Freeman, writing in 1846, “the building is to be simply brought back to what we know or reasonably suppose from analogy to have been its original state; or if additions or alterations are from any cause required, the chief aim must be to make them harmonize with the old structure” (Freeman 1846: 5). In practice, this was far from what actually occurred. In addition to the restoration that took place during this time, there were also many new churches built in the Gothic style. Two organizations contributed greatly to this movement: the Cambridge Camden Society and the Oxford Movement, also known as the Tractarians (O. Chadwick 1990). Stuart Piggott has credited these two bodies with bringing the attention of the clergy, the local aristocracy and the local community to the structure and fabric of their church and in so doing, injecting medieval archaeology and architectural history into the daily lives of those who frequented these churches (Piggott 1976: 176). It was, as Piggott describes it, “all very earnest, rather priggish and dangerously doctrinaire, but its results were extraordinary” (Piggott 1976: 181).

The Oxford Movement was primarily a religious and political undertaking which was founded in 1833 by four Oxford scholars who were steeped in the traditions of High

Church Anglicanism: John Keble, John Henry Newman, Robert Hourell Froude and Edward Bouverie Pusey (Faught 2003: 4-5). The movement questioned the nature of the relationship between church and state, the Roman Catholic heritage of the Church of England, and the Church's social responsibility in the new industrial age (Faught 2003: ix). It is this interest in the origins of the Anglican Church in the Catholic past, as well as the emphasis on church restoration and architecture that makes the Tractarians relevant to this study. Along with the likes of Pugin and the members of the Cambridge Camden Society, they advocated improvements to the structures of church buildings and "Spurred by the architectural demands of ecclesiologists and by the Tractarians' desire for deeper worship, more frequent celebrations of the Eucharist, an exalted understanding of the Church, and a higher view of the clergy, many Anglican churches began to display the full Gothic panoply" (Faught 2003: 118).

Whilst sharing the Oxford group's concerns about the lack of piety, The Cambridge Camden Society was also more explicitly interested in the architecture and restoration of church buildings. They saw three problems with the Church of England as it stood at the end of the Georgian period and criticized it for its architecture, for the way in which services were carried out and for its general lack of piety (Webster 2000: 6). Piggott has argued that it was due to the Camdenians that, beginning in the 1840s, the upper and middle classes of England became interested in both ancient buildings, and by extension, other types of monuments as well (Piggott 1976: 181). Through their magazine, *The Ecclesiologist*, and their various other publications, the Camdenians transformed the face of the church in a way that has had lasting implications to this day. As Webster has written, "It is a mark of the Society's influence that relatively little visual evidence of Georgian internal arrangements survive. Indeed, the unsuspecting might well assume that Anglican churches had always followed Camdenian principles" (Webster 2000: 3). The Camdenians shared with Pugin a desire for authenticity in their use of materials and design motifs, which was linked to their religious fervour, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century (Muthesius 2000: 243).

The extent to which the Anglo-Saxon past was prioritized above all others can be seen in the paper that E.A. Freeman gave in Bristol in 1851 to the Archaeological Institute, in which he wrote that

We might be content to surrender the soaring arches and gleaming vaults of England's noblest temple, we might give up the heroes of Crecy and Agincourt, could we but behold uninjured the massive walls and ponderous arches, which within the first year of their existence had witnessed the last royal son of Woden borne to the shrine he had so lately

reared, which had seen the diadem of Alfred rest upon the brows of the son of Godwin, and gazed in wonder as the scepter of England's native royalty was placed by the Saxon primate in the hand of the Norman Conqueror (Freeman 1852: 10-11)

His paper both mourns the loss of these important monuments and provides a guide for the preservation and conservation of the monuments that survive. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Freeman did not advocate the indiscriminate restoration of ruins, but rather the preservation of what was no longer in use (Freeman 1852: 35) and the careful restoration of churches and other antiquities which had a modern use (Freeman 1852: 42). The Society of Antiquaries generally shared this concern with Freeman, Ruskin and later Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, but despite their best efforts, the destruction that happened during this period was extraordinary (Fawcett 1976: 100).

John Mitchell Kemble

Amongst the many important individuals active during the 1830s and 1840s, John Mitchell Kemble (1807-1857) was perhaps one of the most influential to the development of Victorian Anglo-Saxonism (Williams 2006a: 1). Originally a philologist, and a close friend of the German philologist and mythologist Jakob Grimm (1785-1863) (Wiley 1971: 10-1), he revolutionized the study of the Anglo-Saxon past by, amongst other contributions, drawing attention to the Germanic parallels in both literature and archaeology (Dickins 1974: 21). Grimm was at the centre of a movement to tie together nationhood and language, or in other words, to establish the controversial idea that “a nation must be co-existent with a *Volk*, and that a *Volk* meant people who spoke the same language” (Shippey 2009: 65). Kemble was the first to bring the ideas of Grimm and other continental philologists to England and the study of Anglo-Saxon (Wiley 1971: 5). As his biographer, Bruce Dickins, wrote, “Kemble had qualities and qualifications not often found united in a single man. He had first-hand knowledge of the sources, literary, historical, legal and archaeological, of his period and his outlook was not bounded by the North Sea or the English Channel” (Dickins 1974: 21). It was this broad geographical approach combined with an unparalleled knowledge base that made Kemble's work so revolutionary.

Kemble came from a well-known stage family (his sister was the actress Fanny Kemble and his father was the Examiner of Stage Plays, a job he later inherited) and was educated at Cambridge, where he was a member of the Apostles, a secret society of

undergraduates which was formed in 1820 (Lubenow 1998: 421). Through his education at Cambridge, association with his fellow Apostles and his German connections, as well as his membership in the historical and archaeological societies of Berlin, Munich, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Iceland and England (Kemble 1848: i), Kemble emerged as one of the most important Anglo-Saxon scholars of the period. He was amongst the first scholars to reject the medieval textual sources as “only a confused mass of traditions borrowed from the most heterogeneous sources, compacted rudely and with little ingenuity, and in which the smallest possible amount of historical truth is involved in a great deal of fable” (Kemble 1849b: 3). He illustrated this point by exploring and exposing the stories included in the works Geoffrey of Monmouth and others which came directly from the ancient myths of many different nations and groups, using his broad knowledge of the narrative traditions of various cultures (Kemble 1849b: 16-7). Kemble led the transition away from the old secondary sources towards an approach which relied on philological, archaeological and charter evidence to support its claims. His work was not uncontroversial; in his early career he had criticized lazy English scholarship and compared it to what he saw as superior German and Scandinavian work, a move that antagonized many and had a lasting effect on his job prospects within Britain (Scattergood 2009: 6-7).

One of Kemble’s most lasting contributions was his translation and publication of *Beowulf*, which brought the text very much into the scholarly and public sphere. Although it had been held in the Cottonian Library since the eighteenth century, and transcribed by Thorkelin in 1815 (see Chapter Two), it was Kemble’s translation that brought it forth as a resource for understanding the Anglo-Saxon past. The poem was transcribed in the first volume of Kemble’s edition and translated to English in the second volume, allowing for side-by-side study of the text. He noted the necessity of this publication in his preface, stating “It is remarkable that no notice whatever has been taken of this fine poem by any Anglo-Saxon author: and although this is partly to be attributed to theological causes, it also furnishes a presumption that the invention of the work did not fall within the period embraced by their writings” (Kemble 1833: v-vi). He was extremely critical of Thorkelin’s text and ability with the Anglo-Saxon language, stating that there is not a single part of the text which “does not betray the editor’s utter ignorance of the Anglo-Saxon language (Kemble 1833: xxix-x). Unlike many of the translators and transcribers of the period who saw it as an important part of their job to improve the text, he printed the text without correcting it; he placed his corrections, which he nonetheless saw as bringing the text closer to its intended form, in footnotes to allow the reader to judge for themselves (Kemble 1833: xxiv-v). Whilst his translation

remained the standard edition for many years after it was published, some of his interpretations can be seen as controversial. For example, his preface appears to argue that *Beowulf* is an historical, rather than fictional, work and that the characters could be corroborated by other sources and dated (Shippey 2009: 73).

Kemble is also well known for his excavations in Germany and England, and the parallels that he was uniquely able to draw between the artefacts he uncovered in Germanic graves on both sides of the North Sea. His book on the subject, *Horae Ferales; or, Studies in the Archaeology of the Northern Nations*, remained unpublished (and largely unwritten) at his death, but was finished later by Dr R.G. Latham and Augustus Wollaston Franks of the British Museum and published in 1863 (Kemble 1863). Although his original notes were not found, Kemble's illustrations, some articles he had written and the translated text of three lectures that he gave in German at the opening of the Hanoverian Archaeological Museum were used by the editors to form the final published version (Kemble 1863: xi). It is not clear how much of the text as it was eventually published was what Kemble intended to write, but what is clear from his work is that he was far ahead of his time in terms of cross-cultural comparison and the use of ethnographic sources. The illustrations for this book group together artefacts by type, allowing for a comparison across geographical boundaries. What is known is that, perhaps as a result of having edited Kemble's text, A.W. Franks would go on to visit some German collections and to acquire a small number of German early medieval objects for the British Museum by way of beginning a comparative collection (Caygill 1997: 169).

Kemble played a crucial role in the important shift that came about during this period toward considering the Anglo-Saxon past in relation to the parallel Scandinavian and Continental evidence for the early medieval period. His work in Germany and Scandinavia was important in this revolution, but he was not alone. Kemble's contemporary, John Yonge Akerman was writing about the Anglo-Saxons in relation to their Frankish neighbors and comparing artefacts from the two separate groups (Akerman 1847: 126-8; 1855: 4). Akerman was an honorary member of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of France, a fellow of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Copenhagen and a corresponding member of the Archaeological Institute of Rome, and thus well connected to the archaeologists of Europe (Akerman 1847: no page number). Both Kemble and Akerman must be seen as part of a wider transition towards an understanding of the early medieval period that transcended conventional boundaries and put forth instead the notion of a common Germanic ancestry that spanned the countries that bordered on the North Sea.

Kemble's contribution to broader Anglo-Saxon study lay in his abilities in both philology and archaeology, and his eagerness and proficiency in connecting the two. This can be seen most clearly in his translation and identification of the poem that is inscribed on the Ruthwell Cross - an Anglo-Saxon stone cross now located in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland - which Kemble correctly translated in 1840 (Kemble 1840; Orton et al. 2007: 153). His stated objective in publishing the corrected translation of this runic text was to counter the previous attempted translations by various Icelandic scholars and he rejected "the necessity of appealing to Danish or German industry or ingenuity for the elucidation of our national antiquities" (Kemble 1840: 371). In a subsequent article in *Archaeologia*, Kemble was able to both confirm his translation and provide a context for the lines carved into the cross by discovering that they were an excerpt from a poem entitled 'The Dream of the Holy Rood' found in the Vercelli Manuscript, a recently discovered collection of Old English poetry (Kemble 1844: 32). Due to his overriding linguistic interest, for Kemble, the importance of this discovery was its confirmation of his runic translation and he expressed little interest regarding the relationship of the poem to the inscription on the cross (Kemble 1844: 38).

Race and Migration in Victorian Anglo-Saxonism

Many of the Victorian scholars of the Anglo-Saxon era were primarily concerned with the migration and settlement of their perceived Teutonic ancestors. It was during this period that, newly able to distinguish Anglo-Saxon graves from Celtic or Roman, the emphasis shifted towards understanding the different waves of migration during the fifth century, and what this suggested regarding the ancestry of the modern English population. In this, the Victorian scholars were treading a fine line between emphasizing the Germanicness of their past, whilst also expressing the English exceptionalism that their position as a colonial superpower demanded (P. Hill 2006: 154). Aside from Kemble, whose Germanic convictions were fairly unique, the consensus seemed to be that even Germany, in contrast to England, had failed to live up to the Teutonic promise of the early medieval period (P. Hill 2006: 154). A clear example of this English exceptionalism can be seen in the travel narrative of Charles Wentworth Dilke, who visited the Americas, Australia and India, comparing the superior Anglo-Saxons to the native populations and finding that in every case he had reason to be proud of his countrymen (Dilke 1868). To his mind, this was a struggle of "the dear races against the cheap - the endeavours of the English to hold their own against the Irish and the Chinese" but that, in the end "the dearer are, on the whole, likely to destroy the cheaper peoples, and that

Saxondom will rise triumphant from the doubtful struggle” (Dilke 1868: 405). Looking beyond the nineteenth-century racism of this statement, the most striking aspect is the prediction of a triumphant “Saxon” race, by which of course he means English race. As disturbing as his prediction that “no possible series of events can prevent the English race itself in 1970 numbering 300 millions of beings – of one national character and one tongue. Italy, Spain, France, Russia become pigmies by the side of such a people” (Dilke 1868: 406), it is important to understand that this connection between the past, the present and the future was being drawn by many others who believed in the British Empire.

This increased emphasis on migrations and origins led to the incorporation of a popular pseudo-scientific trend of the time, which promised a positivistic answer to the question of Anglo-Saxon descent. Phrenology, or the study of personality traits through the analysis of human skulls, became increasingly popular during this time, as it provided “scientific” justification for the nationalist and racist sentiments of the Victorian Anglo-Saxonists. Invented in Vienna by Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828), phrenology has been described as a “diagnostic cum character divination method via physiognomical head readings” (Wyhe 2004: 15). Brought to England in 1814 by a pupil of Gall’s, Johann Gaspar Spurzheim (1776-1832) and adapted to suit the British needs of the time, this pseudoscientific method was soon used in the “major intellectual and political debates of the time, be it reform of parliament, education, repeal of the Corn Laws, or simply used to demand respect at a social gathering” (Wyhe 2004: 24). Controversial from the start, mostly for religious reasons (Tomlinson 2005: 98), this methodology had detractors in both Europe and Britain, but was nonetheless in use to some degree as late as 1960 (Wyhe 2004).

The Edinburgh phrenologist George Combe and his brother Andrew established the Edinburgh Phrenological Society in 1820 and the Phrenological Journal in 1824 (Tomlinson 2005: 111) and this led to the establishment of the subject in Britain. This new trend was enthusiastically taken up by the new scientific archaeologists of the nineteenth century, who, anxious to be seen as equally scientifically rigorous as geology or chemistry, and excavating a huge number of graves and barrow, began to analyse the skulls they excavated using the principles of phrenology. Davis and Thurnam, in their 1865 *Crania Britannica*, asserted that the “series of Anglo-Saxon skulls, in their great resemblance to those of the modern Englishman, vindicate the true derivation of the essential characteristics of our race from a Teutonic origin” (J. B. Davis and Thurnam 1865: 238). This bloodline, they reasoned, was pure, because the Anglo-Saxons sold

Britons as slaves, and therefore it was “not improbable that they mingled very sparingly by intermarriage with the people over whom they exercised such tyrannical sway” (J. B. Davis and Thurnam 1865: 7). Kemble, by contrast, believed that he could “safely appeal even to the personal appearance of the peasantry in many parts of England, as evidence how much Keltic blood was permitted to subsist and even to mingle with that of the ruling Germans” (Kemble 1849b: 21). This question of how much of the modern population could be traced back to Anglo-Saxon roots concerned many of the scholars of the time, whether they attempted to access it through the physiological data or the burial record or a combination of the two.

The antiquary and early archaeologist Thomas Bateman (1821-1861), in his *Ten Years' Diggings in Celtic and Saxon Grave Hills*, carefully recorded the measurements and phrenological details of each of the skulls that he excavated (Bateman 1861: 257-78). For him, all the previous scholarship on the topic was lacking, and Sir Richard Colt Hoare's *Ancient Wiltshire*, which came close, was “in a great measure useless to the scientific student, from the absence of any Craniological Notices or Measurements” (Bateman 1861: v). His descriptions of the skulls he had excavated appear to have been specifically designed to produce data which could be studied by future scientists, for instance this description of a skull found in Rolly Low in 1844:

Brachy-cephalic type, with parietal tubers, broad forehead, with traces of frontal suture, and full superciliary ridges; the orbits small, the malar bones vertically narrow; the mouth large, and the teeth much worn and split by forcibly biting hard substances, perhaps in warlike frenzy as the Bersekirs. Femur 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches long (Bateman 1861: 259).

There is no question that this emphasis on skull measurements was part of the larger shift towards hard scientific evidence. It was in this context that the struggle to cope with the issues brought about by accepting the received Biblical chronology began to really affect the study of the Anglo-Saxon past. In 1865, Davis and Thurnam attempted to reconcile the large amount of human diversity with the few thousand years in which it would have to have developed (J. B. Davis and Thurnam 1865: 47). After the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, they could not be ignorant of the considerable timescale that was required to produce such a large amount of diversity. Borrowing their terminology from the courts of law, scholars of English origins attempted to tie together several strands of “circumstantial evidence” from philology, phrenology, history, archaeology and ethnography (Pike 1866: 4). For Pike, “evidence is like a river, which derives its volume and its force from several distinct springs – some of

which may cease to flow without sensibly diminishing the force of volume of the river- all of which must cease to flow before the river can cease to exist” (Pike 1866: 4).

The mid-nineteenth century was the height of the colonial period in British History, meaning that it was also an important time for the exportation of British culture to the wider world. Robert Young has argued that English identity had expanded outside of the borders of England to become a “diasporic identity beyond any geographical boundaries” which included all of the expatriates and colonists now living in every corner of the globe (Young 2008: 231). Although the British government was officially neutral about the export of the Protestant religion to the colonized populations (J. Cox 2008: 10-11), voluntary missionaries to the colonies were crucial to the spread of the religious culture of Britain. The relationship between the Church of England and the British Empire can be traced back as far as the sixteenth century (Strong 2007: 1), but the nineteenth-century expansion of the British Empire brought with it the spread of Protestant religion in many forms.

Scholars of the Anglo-Saxon past saw the analogy between the Augustinian and the nineteenth-century Anglican missions. Kemble likened the Anglo-Saxon mission to the work that had been done in “Peru or in the most modern missions in Australia or New Zealand”, stating that they “followed the same plan, which indeed appears to be the natural one” as the Augustinian missions of the seventh century (Kemble 1849a: 416). It does not appear to have occurred to him that the contemporary missionaries may have been imitating the example of their predecessors, rather he believed that there was a natural way of going about the process of converting nations of people, which both the historical and modern missionaries had adopted. In his discussion of the Roman clergy who converted the Anglo-Saxons, the historian Charles Kingsley wrote “The Teuton was to them as the Hindoo is to us, with the terrible exception, that the positions were reversed; that the Teuton was not the conquered, but the conqueror” (Kingsley 1864: 220). Here both the past and the present are represented through a lens of Empire, linking the religious experiences of, in this case, the colonized Christian native British population with the contemporary colonized Indian population.

Running parallel to the rabid political Anglo-Saxonism of the nineteenth century was an equally potent form of Celticism that was advocated by scholars elsewhere in Britain and on the Continent. Celticism has its own historiography, which is outside of the remit of this study (see Bradley 1999; Carruthers and Rawes 2003; Collis 2003; James 1999), but it is important to note that the Anglo-Saxonist voices of the nineteenth century were not

alone in claiming past peoples as forefathers. Many of the scholars who studied the Anglo-Saxon material were also interested in the Celtic remains, such as J. Romilly Allen, a Welsh scholar whose work on the early British church led him to consider both the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic remains side-by-side and to consider the effects of the Anglo-Saxon conversion on Welsh, Scottish and Irish Christians (J. R. Allen 1889: 3). There were others for whom the most important period in the history of Britain remained the Roman period, and who drew a straight line back from the British Empire to the Roman one (Hingley 2008: 311). The loudest and the strongest of the voices, however, harkened back to the Anglo-Saxons and saw the influence of the Teutonic past in everything they believed their nation was. Many would not have argued with Charles Kingsley when he described the Celts as “poor, savage, and, I fear, on the authority of St Jerome and others, now and then cannibal Celts, with their saffron scarfs, and skenes, and darts, and glibs of long hair hanging over their hypo-gorillaceous visages” (Kingsley 1864: 207).

The Material of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion

It is important to note that the state of the established Church of England was in flux during this period, moving from “a uniquely privileged relationship with the state, in which it was closely bound up with the political and legal system, to being one denomination, albeit still the most powerful one and still formally and legally Established, among several” (Knight 1995: 1). The resurgence of Anglo-Catholic practice and the variety of other types of Christianity available during this time allowed for a much more diverse religious picture in the nineteenth century. At the 1851 Census of Religious Worship, Anglican worship accounted for less than half of the church attendances (Coleman 1980: 7). The historian B.I. Coleman’s study of the Census showed that Anglican worship divided along class and regional lines, with a concentration in the south of England and the lowest attendance in working class populations (Coleman 1980: 20-1, 34). Many of the scholars discussed below hailed from the privileged classes of the south of England, and many were committed to the Church of England, but it is important to note that they were acting against a background of unprecedented religious diversity in Britain. It must also be noted, as Owen Chadwick asserted, that the educated Victorian Christian population no longer believed in the literal historical truth of the Bible after the mid-nineteenth century, a change brought about in part by the historians, geologists and antiquarians who had proved the age of the earth to be much greater than previously supposed (O. Chadwick 1972: 2-3).

The shift that occurred in the archaeology of the Conversion during this time came about in part as a result of the increased emphasis on evidence and proof in historical claims. Whilst previous studies had been content to class the Conversion as something which had happened in the hearts and minds of the Anglo-Saxons, and as such, could be adequately understood through the texts, the typically nineteenth-century concern with evidence and science began to place a stronger emphasis on the material effects of conversion. Nowhere is this more clear than in the search for the temples of the pagan Anglo-Saxons. The eighteenth-century scholars, as previously discussed, were reasonably content to view the lack of excavated evidence for pagan temples as a result of the fact that the pagan Anglo-Saxons, like the Druids with whom they were so often conflated, worshiped outside in the open air, using rocks, groves and trees as the focus of their religious activity. In contrast, the nineteenth-century scholars were convinced that the Anglo-Saxon pagans had once had “priests and altars, a ritual and ceremonies, temples and sacrifices and all the pomp and power of a church-establishment” (Kemble 1849b: 329). Spurred on by new epistemological standards, they set out to find these altars, temples and sites of sacrifice in the ground.

As an historical concept, the Conversion was often used to mark the end of the Iron Age, or the beginning of the historical period in England. Kemble describes the end of the Iron Age in Europe as ending “only with the gradual spread of Christian civilization, which first did away with the burning of the dead body and afterwards with the custom of adoring it” (Kemble 1863: 60). As mentioned above, the British Archaeological Association used the conversion to define sub-groups within the association. Rather than defining their periods of study as “prehistoric” and “historic” as we do today (although those categories did exist), the definition tended to be based on the dichotomy of pagan and Christian subjects.

A criticism leveled at those who have written about the Victorian expression of Anglo-Saxon archaeology in the past is that they have focused too much on the excavation of burials and the importance of the funerary archaeology to nineteenth-century scholars (C. J. Arnold 1997: 6). It is true that there is a bias towards the burial record, but arguably it lies with the Victorian excavators and not the historiographers. Llewellynn Jewitt, writing in 1870, was certainly not alone in asserting that it was:

To the grave-mounds of the early inhabitants of our island, more than any other source, we are indebted for our knowledge of their arts, their habits, and their occupations. Indeed to these mounds and their contents, we owe almost all the knowledge we possess as to the history of the races and peoples who have preceded us, and are enabled to determine,

approximately, their chronological succession as masters of the soil (Jewitt 1870: 1)

The focus on funerary remains came about, in part, because of the lack of datable evidence for other aspects of pagan religious practice. The antiquarian John Yonge Akerman (1806-1873) wrote that, “while the graves of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers furnish such significant evidence of their superstitions, every monumental trace of their heathen worship has been swept away; that although altars and statues erected by the Romans have survived the wreck of time, not a single example of a Teutonic idol has been preserved in England” (Akerman 1855: xx). Where the scholars of the previous century had been largely inclined to see this lack of evidence as a sign that the pagan Anglo-Saxons had not had many idols or temples, the nineteenth century scholars took this to mean that, unlike the Roman stone sculptures, Anglo-Saxon pagan idols had been made from wood and had therefore not survived (Akerman 1855: xxv).

The use of textual narratives to describe Anglo-Saxon material and to support archaeological conclusions continued into the nineteenth century from the previous period, as the use of “illustrative quotations...give some degree of vitality to dry details; and perhaps invest these fragments of old metal and other materials with greater interest, from their connection with human life and daily necessities” (Hume 1863: vi). The Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*, discussed above, had been translated and published in the early part of the nineteenth century and joined Bede as a key textual source for contextualizing and explaining Anglo-Saxon archaeological finds. The first translation of the text was printed in 1815 in Copenhagen by Grimur Thorkelin (Fjalldal 2008), but it was not until after J.M. Kemble’s 1833 translation that it fully entered into the British discourse. After that, it was frequently used in descriptions of burial mounds, using Beowulf’s request to be buried in a barrow with his belongings to explain the artefacts coming out of the ground (c.f. Jewitt 1870: 206-8; T. Wright 1845: 199).

The increased number of barrows opened during this period exacerbated a problem first experienced in the previous century by Faussett and Douglas: many graves that were clearly pagan from the orientation of the bodies and the provision of grave-goods, contained crosses and other Christian symbols. Some simply ignored this inconveniently incongruous fact, as did Jewitt in his 1870 *Grave-Mounds and their Contents*, in which he provides the illustrations of two Anglo-Saxon gold crosses (Jewitt 1870: 253, 69), but makes no mention of them in the text and does not attempt to explain how they came to be in these pagan graves. Akerman acknowledged that there was a cross-shaped ornament present in the grave of the lady at the site of Roundway Down, but stated

further that, “it is by no means certain that the body was that of a Christianised Anglo-Saxon lady” (Akerman 1855: 2). He gave no indication as to what the cross means if not the Christianity of the wearer.

Reverend Bryan Faussett’s collection of Anglo-Saxon grave goods, which had been well-known previously (see T. Wright 1854), was finally published in the nineteenth century by Charles Roach Smith (Faussett 1856), with the assistance and financial backing of Joseph Mayer, a wealthy Liverpool industrialist (R. H. White 1988: 118). The original text of the *Inventorium Sepulchrale* was highly concerned with the religious affiliation of the individuals whose remains were recovered, and Faussett was careful to note down the orientation of each grave and the artefacts with crosses on them in each case (Faussett 1856: 24). Roach Smith also showed himself to be interested in religious affiliation, but his footnotes show that he disagreed with many of Faussett’s conclusions on this front (Faussett 1856: 39). His emphatically written footnotes often directly contradict Faussett’s interpretations of the religious affiliations of the skeletons that he is discussing. In a footnote to a paragraph in which Faussett suggested that a grave containing the burial of a woman that included several crosses must belong to a Christian despite the pagan nature of the burial practices employed, and suggested (without using the term) that this is an example of syncretic religious practice, Roach Smith writes “This is a very illogical assertion. These cross-shaped ornaments can only be looked upon as personal decorations, which show the influence of Christianity in the artistic application of its chief emblem, the cross: but we have no right to assume that they were worn as badges of the new faith” (Faussett 1856: 39).

Roach Smith was a retail chemist in the city of London, unlike many of his contemporaries who were independently wealthy and could afford to support their own research (Robbins 1994: 314). He collected and studied many Roman and British artefacts and coins from London and around the country, and has been seen by some as the original rescue archaeologist for his work on some sites in London that were under threat from development (Hobley 1975: 328). He was a member of forty-two antiquarian and archaeological societies, in both England and France (Robbins 1994: 314). Not only was he a pioneer in the field, but he also was unique in his commitment to displaying the objects he discovered in a museum that was open to the public (Hobley 1975: 333). It was Mayer’s purchase of Faussett’s collection and funding of Roach Smith’s edition (especially the beautiful illustrations by Frederick William Fairholt) which brought it to the attention of the scholarly community (R. H. White 1988: 120).

Regarding the barrows excavated at Breach Downs in Kent, which contained several crosses, Wright wrote:

It is probably that the cross-shaped ornaments had no reference to the Christian symbols; yet it is not unlikely that before the entire conversion of the people to the gospel, many who had accepted its faith still felt a longing to seek their final resting-place among the barrows of their forefathers; and this perhaps gave rise to the canon of the Anglo-Saxon church promulgated in 642, ordering that Christians should be buried in the immediate vicinity of churches. This reverence for the graves of their forefathers would lead the early Saxon Christians to select the vicinity of their ancient burial-places for the site of their churches, which they appear to frequently have done (T. Wright 1845: 209).

Williams traced an upsurge in the number of graves that were excavated and published in the period between 1840 and 1870 (Williams 2006b: 61), which he sees “rather than being the product of Victorian racial thinking, digging for Saxon graves and published [sic] the results was an active constituent practice of Victorian Anglo-Saxonism, one that provided a link between landscape, bones and artefacts in a way texts could not” (Williams 2006b: 77).

The Victorians felt a religious and nationalistic affinity with the early medieval Christians that appears extreme to modern minds. The early Christian Anglo-Saxons were seen as a part of the historical “self”, contrasted against the pagan “other”. Syncretism, therefore, was seen as problematic, because it could not be ignored in the material record, but it placed some erstwhile ancestors into a sort of limbo - neither noble savages, nor fellow Christians - and as such, Victorian perceptions of syncretism tend to either de-emphasize or outright dismiss the meaning behind complex religious expression. Although the material that they were excavating displayed the characteristics of a gradual, complex transition, their interpretations of that material betray a desire for a conversion narrative that was both binary and easily visible in the archaeological record.

Another important theme during this period was the perception of the pagan Anglo-Saxons as ready and waiting for conversion (Williams 2008: 68). This idea was shared by both William Wylie and J.M. Kemble, for whom the German pagans could be seen as similarly prepared (Kemble 1849b: 328). To the Victorian Christian, it seemed inconceivable that paganism could satisfy the religious needs of their ancestors, and therefore something must have been lacking from their lives. Kemble, however, was able to see that, although they paled in comparison to his own Christian faith, the pagan beliefs of the Anglo-Saxons did provide “comfort in affliction, or support in difficulty” and

that the pagans were “guided and directed in the daily business of life by the conviction of his responsibility to higher powers than any which he recognized in the world around him” (Kemble 1849b: 327-8). Most importantly, perhaps, for Kemble, “we do find the pregnant fact, that Christianity met but little resistance among them, and enjoyed an easy triumph, or at worst a careless acquiescence, even amongst those whose pagan sympathies could not be totally overcome” (Kemble 1849b: 443). In a sense, this was more telling and more meaningful than all of the other information he had assembled on the subject of Anglo-Saxon paganism; for Kemble, their willingness to convert described their existing beliefs more exactly than any of his cross-cultural comparisons or textual research.

Whilst the archaeological focus remained primarily on the funerary evidence during this period, some scholars looked to other sources for information, such as church buildings and sculpture. Thomas Bateman, in his *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire*, included a section on ecclesiastical remains, the results of “blood-thirsty rulers, quieting their consciences by the erection of religious edifices” (Bateman 1848: 170). The study of church architecture, although an important part of the study of Anglo-Saxon religion, tended, during this period, to assume conversion. In other words, the study of these buildings was more often taken to be part of the medieval Christian past, rather than something which could inform about the actual processes of conversion. Bateman included even the earliest examples of Anglo-Saxon churches in a section entitled “Medieval and Ecclesiastical Antiquities” (Bateman 1848: 177-242), in which he argued for a Saxon date for the churches in the county, rather than a Norman date (Bateman 1848: 179). He does not, however, attempt to connect the churches to the process of conversion in any way, because the Conversion was seen as an accepted fact rather than open for debate.

Bateman linked early Anglo-Saxon stone sculptures to the Conversion, albeit loosely. He stated that “The stone church crosses, and the fonts and other sculptures of Saxon types (some of them in red sandstone) prove that Christianity had taken deep root, and that the district possessed elegant religious edifices, the work of the Saxon inhabitants, previous to the invasion of this country by the Normans” (Bateman 1848: 179). This conclusion was presumably not news to his readers. For the majority of scholars, however, churches and sculpture were not a meaningful way of understanding the Conversion, rather they were indicative of the nature of early Christianity once it had already been achieved. These material remains were not seen as the results of acts of conversion, but rather the actions of those already converted.

The question of how to characterize Anglo-Saxon paganism became an important one during this time. In keeping with the notion that the population was awaiting conversion, Kemble rejected the idea that it might be comparable either to “a dull and debasing fetish-worship, worthy of African savages” or to “a vague and colourless pantheism, in which religion vanishes away, and philosophy gropes for a basis which it cannot find” (Kemble 1849b: 432). For him it was instead a childlike connection to nature and the childlike acceptance of God, for “Such as the child is, has the child-like nation been, before the busy hum of commerce, the crashing strokes of the piston, the heavy murmur of innumerable spinning-jennies necessarily banished more natural music from our ears” (Kemble 1849b: 433). Nineteenth-century Anglican faith was simply the more jaded, adult version of the carefree, primitive paganism of the Anglo-Saxon, better acquainted with the Bible, but perhaps further from God.

A continuing preoccupation with the idea of building of churches on top of the ruins of pagan temples or the rededication of pagan shrines for Christian use can be seen in the Victorian period. Kemble asserted that “the holy places had lost none of their sanctity; the holy buildings had not been leveled with the ground, but dedicated in another name; the pagan sacrifices had not been totally abolished, but only converted into festal occasions, where the new Christians might eat and drink, and continue to praise God” (Kemble 1849b: 444). This idea derived from Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* and had yet to be supported by any excavated evidence from the foundations of churches, except for the case, discussed in the previous chapter, of the bird bones in Twinham, which had been seen as positive proof of this process in the eighteenth century. This example is not cited in the nineteenth-century literature, however, and appears to have faded from view, leaving behind an exclusively text-based epistemological basis for this concept.

To explain the length of time it took for Christianity to take hold, some scholars put forward the view that, “With the mass of people the conversion was at first a mere change of forms, and they easily resumed their old customs; and it naturally took some years to make the change permanent” (T. Wright 1892: 209). Akerman wrote that the pagan forms of burial may have continued into the Christian period, due to the fact that, “even in the most solemn season of the year their drunken orgies were prolonged throughout the night, and led to excesses which the most rigid enactments were insufficient to restrain” (Akerman 1855: xvii-iii). Whether he imagined the partially converted Anglo-Saxons sneaking out at night to bury their dead after the fully Christianized population had passed out from heavy drinking is unclear, but he added

that “While such a state of morals existed, we may conclude that the less glaring and offensive observances of Pagan times were tolerated, especially in their sepulchral rites. How long they continued in England is a problem yet to be solved by the researches of the archaeologist” (Akerman 1855: xxviii).

Conclusion

Important changes took place during the nineteenth century, and the studies which were undertaken have had a long lasting impact on the study of the Conversion to this day. The broader historical narratives remained unchanged, however; this was a transition primarily of epistemology, not in ways that the evidence was understood or used. The Victorian concern with discovering incontrovertible physical evidence for historical narratives which had previously been accepted as true from the textual sources has considerably influenced the ways in which we conceptualize the archaeology of conversion to this day.

As in previous centuries, the study of the Anglo-Saxon religious past was treated as two static parts – pagan and Christian – and not discussed a dynamic transitional whole. The emphasis was on understanding the nature of paganism and the nature of early Christianity, rather than on the questions of how and why the change from one to the other took place. The process of conversion only featured in the discussion where the identity of an individual was in question, as with the cases of pagan burials containing crosses. Even at this stage, with significant leaps that had been made in the understanding of the Anglo-Saxon past, no one was asking why or even how the conversion had taken place. None of the Victorian barrow diggers were concerned with understanding why the individuals who had created the archaeological record they were excavating had converted, or rather they knew the answer was a spiritual, Christian one. Who would not convert, when the revealed truth of the gospels was placed before them? The emphasis on making connections between Anglo-Saxon Christianity and the modern Anglican Church, which had been in place since the Reformation but was strengthened during the Victorian period of Anglo-Saxonism, meant that what they perceived in the Anglo-Saxon past was the triumph of their *own* religion over the forces of evil.

Many have seen the Victorian period as the point of origin for all of our modern conceptions of the Anglo-Saxon past, including our ideas about Anglo-Saxon religion and religious change. There is an element of truth in that assertion, as we have seen above. Like any good origin story, however, this Victorian history functions to partially obscure

what had come before. It is possible to overstate the importance of the nineteenth century in the history of the study of the Anglo-Saxon past. By claiming the Victorian past as our past, we risk effectively erasing *its* past and the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century scholarship on the subject gets subsumed into our overwhelming need for a nostalgic connection to the Victorian archaeologists, digging barrows and collecting brooches. In fact, although Anglo-Saxon archaeology certainly occupied a larger part of the nineteenth century cultural zeitgeist than it ever had before (or ever would again), the Victorian scholarship of the Anglo-Saxon past was only a single link in a long chain.

What is archaeology? Perhaps I can best begin by saying what I think archaeology is not. It is not a subject in its own right, as are History, Philosophy, or, say, the Biological Sciences. I cannot imagine Oxford setting up an Honour School of Archaeology or offering a Doctorate in Archaeology. Nor, I fancy, can an apprehending of its nature lead directly, or with an logical compulsion, to the definition of a place for it to hold, in its own right, among the Arts or Sciences (C. F. Hawkes 1948: 4).

Chapter 6: The Later Victorian Period and the World Wars 1880-1950

Despite the progress made during the early Victorian period in understanding the archaeology of the early medieval religious past, in 1889 the Welsh archaeologist J. Romilly Allen (1847-1907) represented the state of the subject in a particularly gloomy light, writing that not only would further analysis of the textual evidence likely never lead to a fuller understanding of how and when the Conversion happened, but also that no scholar had yet attempted to elucidate the period through the material remains, leaving Conversion studies poorly understood (J. R. Allen 1889: v). Allen's condemnation of the state of the field reflects the superficial analysis undertaken by the previous generation, whose interest in the Conversion lay chiefly in assigning burials to either the Christian or the pagan period, and whose primary interest in the pagan burials was to identify the point of geographical origin from which the individual had migrated. The chapter which follows addresses the period between 1880 and 1950, during which the emphasis shifted from the burial record, and dialogues on the archaeology of the Conversion were expanded to encompass the structures, monuments and portable relics that Allen acknowledged in 1889 (J. R. Allen 1889: v). This epistemological expansion was part of a larger shift in late Victorian attitudes towards the preservation and understanding of ancient monuments which also included the first Ancient Monuments Protection Act in 1882 (T. Murray 1989: 55) and the many subsequent revisions of that law.

This crucial epoch encompasses the history of the archaeological research on the subject of the English Conversion up until the recognized origin of modern medieval archaeology in 1950 (Clarke 1993: 37). Placing the beginning of medieval archaeology at such a late date is disputed; many recognize the origins of medieval archaeology farther back in time (and this thesis has argued for that view), however 1950 does mark a transition, and can be used to distinguish between the two eras. It was around this time that medieval archaeology began to be accepted by the British archaeological

establishment, which had previously been dominated by prehistorians. Despite the political and scholarly trends which moved archaeology away from interest in the Anglo-Saxon past, several important excavations took place during this era, most notably the work of E.T. Leeds in Oxfordshire and the rediscovery of Sutton Hoo in 1939 (Bruce-Mitford 1947). These changed the face of the Anglo-Saxon past. With the exception of the debate surrounding the religious implications of the assemblage at Sutton Hoo, the early twentieth century was something of a hiatus or interlude in the archaeology of the Conversion. It is, however, interesting to consider the reasons behind the apparent cessation of archaeological interest away from a subject which had so exercised the antiquarians and archaeologists of the nineteenth century.

The fact that World War I and World War II occurred in the first half of the twentieth century renders this era a transitional period in the history of Anglo-Saxon archaeology. Lying between the extremes of nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxonism and the new post-war archaeology of the second half of the twentieth century, this time is perhaps most notable for the small number of important excavations which took place amidst the backlash against the Teutonism of the previous generation of scholars. It had been politically advantageous to claim a Teutonic past since the eighteenth century, but once Germany became the common European enemy, there was a rush to emphasize the distance and distinct nature of English culture. As a result this was a less productive time for the archaeology of the Conversion, but it *was* one in which the scene was set and techniques were developed which allowed later twentieth-century scholars of the early medieval period to flourish. In the history of the archaeology of conversion, this period was notable as one of transition from the Victorian nationalistic mindset, towards something we recognize as a modern archaeological paradigm. This transition was neither smooth nor simple, as this chapter will show, but by the end of the first half of the twentieth century, changes in the political, social, religious and wider archaeological environment had altered the archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion beyond recognition.

Modernism, Futurism and the Past

It is tempting to see the early part of the twentieth century as a time of looking forward rather than back, a time when figures such as Evelyn Waugh railed against “the preservation of rural England, and the preservation of ancient monuments, and the transportation of Tudor cottages, and the collection of pewter and old oak” (Waugh 1930: 55). As the modernist and futurist movements gained in popularity, artists and

writers appeared to have completely rejected the past and all that it stood for. Alexandra Harris has convincingly argued, however, that by the 1930s there was already a quiet backlash against this complete abandonment of the past and the adoption of a mechanistic, universal modernism in its place (A. Harris 2010: 11). Many of the well-known names of the early part of the century are included in this group that Harris termed the 'Romantic Moderns', including Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, Dorothy L. Sayers, John Betjeman, Cecil Beaton and especially the painter John Piper, whose landscapes made use of the aerial photographs taken by O. G. S. Crawford, the well-known archaeologist (A. Harris 2010: 25-7). Their relationship to the past could never have been as uncomplicated as that of their Victorian predecessors – World War I had irrevocably shattered the trust of the nineteenth century – but the Romantic Moderns began to express a certain nostalgia for the country houses, poetry, food and churches of the past (A. Harris 2010: 204). By 1945, even Waugh, who had been so dismissive of the British tendency toward preserving the past, betrayed a certain longing for a national history in *Brideshead Revisited*, although he was careful to distance himself from these sentiments by assigning those emotions to a middle class character who is nostalgic not for his own past, but for the past of the aristocratic Flyte family (Waugh 1945). It was against this background of upheaval that new methods of excavation and new comprehensive theories to explain human life and behavior were created. History – and with it historical archaeology – was problematic, but the prehistoric past could still be safely studied.

Archaeology at the Turn of the Century

The last years of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century represents an important period in the development of what is termed the "culture history" school of archaeological thought. During this time, prehistoric archaeologists traded the evolutionary concept of culture, in which all peoples were seen to be progressing through the same set of stages - some more quickly than others - for the theory of diffusion and the idea that cultural innovations were spread through contact and migration (Trigger 2006: 152-3). This had a limited influence on Anglo-Saxon archaeology, with some few exceptions (see Leeds 1913 for example). The key changes for historical archaeology during this time were, however, the emphasis given to monuments and standing structures and the preservation and conservation of an idealized rural, idyllic English landscape. The movement toward preserving the countryside as a way of preserving the essence of the English national character was particularly strong between 1918 and 1950, and many of our current ideas about the English landscape can be seen to date to that period (Matless 1998: 14).

When the Ancient Monuments Act finally passed in 1882, it was not seen to be particularly effective and was in fact fairly disappointing for those who had worked so hard throughout the preceding decade to get it passed (T. Murray 1989: 56). Nonetheless, it was an important moment in the development of a public archaeological consciousness. Archaeological remains and monuments that had previously been the business of private owners or the private societies became, at least partly, the concern of the state (Chippindale 1983: 3). General Augustus Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers (1827-1900) was appointed as the first Inspector, and left to decide how he would carry out the job (Chippindale 1983: 19). On the first schedule were thirty-eight sites in England and Wales, as well as eleven in Scotland, mostly prehistoric in nature and leaving out some sites which today appear obvious, such as Hadrian's Wall (Chippindale 1983: 11). The division of the ancient monuments into three separate lists - one for Scotland, one for England and Wales and one for Ireland - formalized in law the nationalistic divisions between the archaeologies of these regions (Breeze 1996: 95-6). When, in 1910, an architect, Sir Charles Reed Peers (1868-1952) was appointed Inspector of Monuments, he shifted the emphasis of conservation from the nineteenth-century ideal of restoring buildings to their original form to a more holistic view that accepted the importance of secondary alterations as part of the historical and social value of the structure (Ralegh Radford 1953: 365). In 1913, Lord Curzon's rewriting of the act removed the need for the land owner's consent for scheduling a monument, a change which removed the ability of individuals to refuse the listing of a site they owned and transferred some of the responsibility of upkeep back to the owner (Chippindale 1983: 32-3).

Further pressure on the government to act to protect the national past was felt after the 1927 scare that land around Stonehenge would be sold for modern housing and the realization on the part of those campaigning against this that there was in fact no legal reason why it should not go ahead (T. Champion 1996: 48). The 1930s have been valorized as a "golden age" for the preservation of monuments (Saunders 1983: 20). The emphasis during this time was on the preservation of medieval buildings and ruins, and the amount of public access, the provision of guidebooks and the care and protection of the sites was unprecedented (Saunders 1983: 20). This was the state of the Department until 1945, when it expanded greatly to cope with both a larger and a broader remit (Saunders 1983: 22). It is clear that this was a period in which the social value of the past was being emphasized in Britain.

The processes and ideologies of nature conservation changed during this period as well. Running parallel to the increased emphasis on antiquities was pressure from naturalists and geologists to create national parks and conservation areas to protect locations of natural beauty (R. Morris 2007: 336). Although it would be several decades before landscape archaeology came into its own, it was during this period that whole landscapes were considered to be units worthy of conservation effort (Matless 1998: 14). The preservationists of the first half of the twentieth century reacted against both the industrialization of the nineteenth century and the modernism of their own time by emphasizing the importance of the rural landscape and the natural beauty of the land (Matless 1998: 28). To some extent this also included the archaeological and architectural material found within the landscape, but the primary focus remained on the natural landscape.

In 1895, The National Trust, Britain's largest charity, was established, with the aim of protecting places and buildings of beauty and historic interest (Gaze 1988: 25; R. Morris 2007: 334). The original emphasis of the National Trust was on the preservation of open spaces (Cannadine 1995: 14), a reflection of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century concern with rural, idyllic Englishness (Howkins 1986: 63). Although the Trust did purchase some historically important buildings in the early years (Fedden 1974: 24-5), this was secondary to the purpose of preserving what "was natural rather than man-made, rural rather than urban" (Cannadine 1995: 14). It wasn't until the 1930s that the focus shifted to include more emphasis on the conservation of buildings, and especially on the preservation of country houses (Cannadine 1995: 19-20). This was, however, an important development in the history of archaeology because it embodied the combined growth of environment and landscape studies, work on monuments and standing structures and most of all, formalization and funding of a body tasked with supporting these aims. At the same time and in the same context, archaeological excavation was beginning to become similarly formalized and funded.

In 1889, Sir John Evans, then President of the Society of Antiquaries of London, gave £500 to establish a fund for archaeological research (Fulford 2007: 353). It was partly as a result of the availability of funds that large-scale excavations such as those undertaken at Silchester and Caerwent became possible at the turn of the twentieth century (Fulford 2007: 358). Together with the legislation and implementation of the Ancient Monuments Act, this spelled a large-scale change for the practice of archaeology during this period. In the post war period, the majority of the Society's research funds were devoted to supporting rescue archaeology (Fulford 2007: 370).

Unparalleled destruction during the bombing of many British cities, especially in and around London, caused archaeological methods to change (Lucas 2001: 36-51) and the amount of excavated material that was available was larger at this time than it had ever previously been. The Ministry of Works, the governmental department within which the Inspector of Monuments worked, in a pamphlet entitled *War and Archaeology*, attributed much of the progress made in archaeology to the rescue work carried out during and directly after the Second World War (1949: 6-7). The building of military training camps and airfields throughout the country led to the excavation of many sites that may not otherwise have been discovered, and the Ministry was happy to credit these discoveries and the attendant advances in excavation technique to the influence of the War (1949: 7). This period has been seen by many as the origin of modern field archaeology and the birth of rescue archaeology (Bahn 1996: 198-9; Darvill 2009: 412). The Ministry also addressed the progress made in the recording and preservation of standing historic buildings damaged by bombing in London and elsewhere (Anonymous 1949). Whilst many buildings were lost to bombing, the tone of the pamphlet is generally positive, stating that “the stress of war produced what decades of peace had failed to give us” (Anonymous 1949), namely a comprehensive list of historic buildings. It celebrates the role of the Town and Country Planning Acts of 1944 and 1947 (the origin of the modern “listed” status) in protecting standing, inhabited historical buildings (Anonymous 1949).

The wars were also transformative to the ways in which archaeological field survey was carried out. It was during this period that aerial photography, originally developed as a military technique, began to be used for archaeological purposes, leading to a huge increase in the number of recognized archaeological sites (O. G. S. Crawford 1953: 45-6). In 1928, O.G.S. Crawford and Alexander Keiller - heir to a marmalade fortune and excavator, amongst other sites, of Windmill Hill and Avebury (L. J. Murray 1999) - published *Wessex from the Air*, a book which changed the face of archaeology in Britain, and began a new phase of field archaeology in Britain and abroad (O. G. S. Crawford 1953: 45). Although the effects of this new technique were not taken full advantage of until after the end of the Second World War, this approach would go on to have a major impact on the practice of field archaeology.

This was a time, according to some, of democratization in the field of archaeology, in terms of both class and gender. Women were formally admitted into the Society of Antiquaries in 1921, after having been excluded for much of the Victorian period

(Catalani and Pearce 2006: 254). Women had largely been excluded from the field since the nineteenth century, although a large number worked unacknowledged for and with male archaeologists. The exclusion of women from fellowship and attending meetings was implemented to an extraordinary degree. In 1901, due to the presence of the wife of the ailing Sir John Evans, who had taken to accompanying him to meetings, women were officially banned and notices were posted requiring her to wait in the corridor (J. Evans 1956: 352). Catalani and Pearce have noted that when significant women archaeologists started to emerge in the later nineteenth century, they were either unaware of or uninterested in claiming allegiance with their early modern female predecessors (Catalani and Pearce 2006: 273). This was a reflection of the wider academic community at this time. When Dorothy Garrod became the Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge in 1939, as both the first woman and the first prehistorian ever to hold a professorship at either Oxford or Cambridge (P. J. Smith 2009: 69), it symbolized the beginning of a tectonic shift in the role of women within the discipline. Others have argued that the role of women in archaeology still lacks true parity (S. Champion 1998: 194-5), but these advances must be seen as meaningful, if only in terms of acknowledging the work already being undertaken by women in archaeology.

The inclusion of women into archaeological scholarship was only a part of the widening demographic. The early twentieth century also saw an increase in the professionalization of the field of archaeology (P. J. Smith 2009: 1). By 1950, archaeology had become the business of professionals and had taken on an entirely new character, in which “anyone who was not university-centred, or at least university trained, was an amateur” (P. J. Smith 2009: 1). Prior to 1915, when Miles Burkitt had become the first to lecture exclusively on prehistoric archaeology, this was emphatically not the case; archaeology was considered an interesting pastime for the independently wealthy, but not a vocation (P. J. Smith 2009: 24-5). By 1950 archaeology had become a job and archaeologists were increasingly being paid to do the work that their predecessors had done recreationally.

This coincided with a general trend toward an increasingly professionalized society (Perkin 1989). The social historian Harold Perkin considered the period which includes the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century as a time when Britain transitioned from a society based on property and industry to a professional society that was based on the human capital created by education and exclusion of the uneducated and unqualified (Perkin 1989: 2). Perkin argued that the inter-war years especially saw a meaningful increase in the number of individuals who were elevated by education and training to the professional classes (Perkin 1989: 248).

Social mobility was defined by the ability to progress within the state-sponsored education system to an unprecedented degree in this period, and it was the beginning of an arguably more meritocratic social system (Perkin 1989: 248). Not only did early twentieth century archaeology follow this trend of professionalism and meritocracy, but the wellspring of this new professionalism was in the universities and this invested university affiliation with a degree of authority that it had never previously carried. As a part of this movement towards professionalism, the local antiquarian societies - that had been such a vital part of the nineteenth century development of archaeology - became the object of ridicule and derision (Stout 2008: 41-2). This was the birth of a new class of archaeologist.

By 1950 there had been some backlash against nationalism in archaeology, a phenomenon that had implications for the study of the Anglo-Saxon past. It was during the Second World War that archaeology in Britain moved towards the study of the global past that transcended national boundaries. The *Conference of the Future of Archaeology* was held in London 1943 and some of the discussion, recorded in the proceedings, focused on minimising the role of the state and nationalistic ideologies in the future of archaeology (C. Evans 1995: 313). For example, in his paper at the conference, Grahame Clark excoriated nationalism for “undermining the solidarity of Man” and proposed a new educational paradigm founded on archaeology and the “biological unity and common cultural inheritance of mankind” (Clark 1943: 7). It is clear from the papers in this volume that World War I and World War II had forced the archaeological establishment to consider the implications of their work for the wider world and the danger of drawing nationalistic conclusions from the material record, but in so doing also set a particular agenda for subsequent archaeological research.

Archaeology was, therefore, a discipline in flux. Advances in techniques and the formalization of archaeological bodies produced more available material from which to theorize about the past. The increasing professionalization of archaeology and the added focus on universities as centres of archaeological knowledge led to a more formal disciplinary identity than ever before. Whilst these changes were more important within prehistoric archaeology, proto-historic and historic archaeology were also affected by the transitions that occurred. Together with the strong emphasis on preserving the natural landscape, and, to a lesser degree, the built heritage of England, this newly formalized version of archaeology had begun to fundamentally alter the way in which the past was conceptualized. The seeds were planted during this period for the resurgence of interest in the Anglo-Saxon past that occurred in the late twentieth century.

Anglo-Saxon Archaeology

Medieval archaeology in Britain changed greatly during this period, becoming a much fuller discipline. Helen Clarke has shown, however, that it was not until the 1930s that any medieval secular settlements other than castles were excavated, and not until 1940 that the first useful survey of medieval artefacts was published (Clarke 1993: 38). In his 1937 lecture on the state of archaeology in Britain, Christopher Hawkes exposed just how little was known about the past and his judgment fell particularly harshly on Anglo-Saxon archaeology. Although the Peers Report, seven years previously, had taken a fairly satisfied view of the state of early medieval archaeology, Hawkes was careful to point out that amongst other issues, “A grave-by-grave study of a really big early cemetery does not exist, and what is worse, there is very little general interest in repairing this omission” and “...only one pagan village has ever been published or indeed excavated at all” (C. F. Hawkes 1937: 67). In fact, Hawkes wrote, it was only possible to be complacent about the state of pagan Anglo-Saxon archaeology if you compared it to that of the Christian Anglo-Saxon period, which was in an even worse position (C. F. Hawkes 1937: 67-8).

Early medieval archaeology remained somewhat insulated from the larger transitions in archaeology and conservation during this time, but the changing archaeological climate of the early twentieth century did have some effect on the field. For Anglo-Saxon archaeology, one of the most important transitions that occurred was the shift in focus from the “archaeology of death” towards an archaeology that embraced the material of living societies, rendered possible by the increasing numbers of excavations of habitation sites and less emphasis on cemeteries (C. Evans 1989: 438). This was not necessarily specifically directed toward early medieval remains, but implications could be felt in the shift toward incorporating the study of Anglo-Saxon art, architecture, settlement, migration patterns and portable objects such as pottery and metalwork. A fuller picture of the material past of the Anglo-Saxon period began to emerge after 1956, with the establishment of the Society for Medieval Archaeology and the large-scale excavations undertaken in the second half of the twentieth century (Dickinson 1983: 34).

This was not a completely unproductive time for the study of early medieval material culture. The work of W.G. Collingwood (1854-1932), who published *Northumbrian Crosses* in 1927 and, in doing so, revolutionized the field of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture studies is a notable addition (J. Hawkes 2007: 143). Groundbreaking in his day for a

unique art-historical approach to the material, Collingwood has been since criticized for his ideas about the evolution of Anglo-Saxon art styles, which are seen as those of the “un-academic connoisseur and the late nineteenth-century British imperialist, steeped in racism and nationalism” (J. Hawkes 2007: 143). Closely related to John Ruskin and his school, Collingwood studied Anglo-Saxon sculpture at a time when it occupied two very different and discrete spheres, “that of the School and Gallery, a space that ensured its status as ‘art’ and all that entailed at the end of the nineteenth century; and that of archaeology, where it could be considered collectively as a coherent ‘corpus of material’” (J. Hawkes 2007: 152). By bringing these two aspects together, Collingwood changed the way that Anglo-Saxon art was understood. The main aim of Collingwood’s study was to create an evolutionary series of stone crosses, to show them as part of a process of change that could be dated and located geographically (W. G. Collingwood 1927). Crucial to Collingwood’s analysis was his division of the “Anglian monuments” into seven schools of carving, including Hexham, Hoddam and Rippon (W. G. Collingwood 1927: 119). His study was valued in its day for providing a glimpse of “the beginnings, middle, and end of northern cross-sculpture” (Kendrick and Hawkes 1932: 340), a subject that had not previously had any temporal framework.

Another key development during this time, recognized for its importance by his contemporaries, was the excavation done by Edward Thurlow Leeds (1877-1955) of the settlement at Sutton Courtenay (Leeds 1922, 1926, 1947), of which Kendrick and Hawkes wrote, “thanks to this really very important discovery and to some subsequent finds ...we are beginning to know something of the squalid, miserable little villages that were the abodes of the Saxon invaders” (Kendrick and Hawkes 1932: 320). Leeds was a prolific excavator, whose work can be seen to have greatly influenced Anglo-Saxon archaeology in the first half of the twentieth century (MacGregor 2007b). His work at Sutton Courtenay was the first systematic excavation of an Anglo-Saxon settlement to be conducted. The excavation undertaken by Leeds and his team from the Oxford University Archaeological Society revealed a total of 33 houses and a substantial amount of artefactual material that allowed the site to be dated to the late fifth century (Leeds 1947: 92).

Leeds’ work at Sutton Courtenay had implications for Anglo-Saxon archaeology on several scales; it was not only the first settlement to be uncovered in full, but also the recognition of what are now called Sunken Featured Buildings but were, at the time, seen as the basements of larger structures (Leeds 1922: 185). It must be noted that despite the progress Leeds made in increasing understanding of Anglo-Saxon settlements in the

ground, he remained unable to identify the remains of halls, the visualization of which would have required a type of open-area excavation not yet in use at the time. It was also during the course of this project that the small rings made of clay which had previously been unidentified and erroneously dated to the “late Celtic” age were determined to be early medieval loom-weights based on their association with the remains of a loom in one of the Anglo-Saxon houses (Leeds 1926: 75). Leeds’ ultimate interpretation of the village, based on its early date of settlement and equally early date of abandonment, was a frontier community, whose inhabitants would have faced “continuous resistance from a hard core of native opposition, during one of whose attacks the Sutton Courtenay village seems to have been overrun and either exterminated or temporarily put out of action” (Leeds 1947: 93). Leeds compared the objects found at the site to continental parallels from sites in France, Germany and Holland (Leeds 1922: 185; 1926: 78), but he also found evidence of first-generation migration in the skeletons buried at the site. He reported that one of the male skeletons, which was young and robust, should be assumed to be one of the “invaders”, due to both its morphology and the comparatively young age at which the individual died (Leeds 1922: 169).

Like many of the Anglo-Saxon scholars of previous generations, the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century writers often focused on the migration question to the exclusion of nearly everything else. Improvements in the dating of objects and sites at the start of the twentieth century offered hope that understandings of the period were soon to be placed on a more secure epistemological footing (Lucy 2002: 148). It was the work of pioneers such as Leeds which allowed Anglo-Saxon archaeologists to begin to escape the bounds of historical chronology and the rigid framework of dates and events imposed on them by the textual sources (MacGregor 2007b: 32). It was not until the turn of the century that there was an adequate amount of available material culture from which to begin to make claims that could equal those that came from textual sources, and it was Leeds’ work in bringing that material culture together into a single volume that allowed for the possibility of considering large-scale research questions, such as those related to settlement patterns and migration (MacGregor 2007b: 27). Using the artefacts, art and architecture of the early medieval period, the debate centered not only on where the Anglo-Saxon populations had come from, but also where they had settled in England. The work of Leeds on brooches (Leeds 1936) and J.N.L. Myres (Myres 1969, 1977) on pottery types during this period were important attempts to trace the migration and movement of Germanic groups through objects.

John Nowell Linton Myres (1902-1989) began his pioneering work on the pottery types of the early Anglo-Saxon period in 1931, and over several decades finally produced a framework for classifying and dating Anglo-Saxon pots (Myres 1969: 1-2). As an undergraduate at Oxford, Myres had joined E.T. Leeds' archaeological society in 1919 and became its president in 1923 (A. J. Taylor 1990: 517). Using the cremation cemetery of Caistor-by-Norwich (excavated between 1932 and 1937 by F. R. Mann) as his type site, he provided for the Anglo-Saxon period something that had long been established for many other periods in British archaeology, a ceramic typology (Myres 1969: 5). This work culminated in the publication of the two-volume *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Pottery of the Pagan Period* (Myres 1977). Nearly all of the pottery that Myres studied came directly from funerary contexts, but he was concerned primarily with finding continental parallels for the urns and thus investigating their implications for migration, rather than any religious implications of the cremation burial rite (Myres 1969: 8-9).

Many scholars of this era tried to explain the presence of both inhumation and cremation graves by suggesting that the individuals disposed by different methods may have come from different parts or tribes of the Germanic homeland (Leeds 1913: 26). These differences had previously been interpreted as the result of changes in funerary practices over time, but a better understanding of stratigraphy and chronology had forced a reevaluation of this question. Even the historian Frank Stenton, in his 1943 tome, *Anglo-Saxon England*, despite a general disinclination to use archaeological material, used the presence of cremation graves to signify the presence of "Anglian" migration to the north of England (Stenton 1943: 13). Again the dominant theories that evolved to explain these changes in burial practice had almost nothing to do with religious or spiritual beliefs and focused entirely on the questions of migration.

In 1935, the Ordnance Survey produced the first edition of the *Map of Britain in the Dark Ages*, including all sites known to date from between A.D. 410 and 871 (O. G. S. Crawford 1935). Compiled by O.G.S. Crawford, this was a revolutionary step forward in providing a visual representation of known sites and placing them in spatial relation to each other, something which had not been accomplished before. It was part of a series of period maps that Crawford collated and published in the 1930s, which included England in the Seventeenth Century, Neolithic Wessex and the Celtic Earthwork of Salisbury Plain (Hauser 2008: 70-1). The map combined historical sources with information from archaeological reports and place-name evidence, and it maintained a high standard for the evidence that had to be present before a site could be included (O. G. S. Crawford 1935: 8). Much of the historical evidence for the map was either provided or corroborated by

Bede, who is called “a representative of his time” in the introduction, arguing that what knowledge Bede had would have been shared by all of his contemporaries (O. G. S. Crawford 1935: 7). This historical evidence was combined, for the first time, with the results of centuries of excavation and place-name studies, so that “the different kinds of evidence, being quite independent, act as a valuable check on each other; and it is interesting to note that what may be called the historical sites often appear in districts that are also archaeologically represented” (O. G. S. Crawford 1935: 5). This is probably not such a coincidence as it seems, since the process of choosing an historical site to excavate, prior to the advent of developer-funded archaeology, often began with the textual sources, but the observation displayed a newfound ability to make spatial comparisons regarding Anglo-Saxon sites, something which was not possible before the publication of the map.

The study of Anglo-Saxon archaeology had, however, lost much of its popularity since the early Victorian period. Where it was still being undertaken, it had become more measured and more scientific, and had lost much of the romance and excitement it had held for the previous generations. It was also, for the first time since the sixteenth century, no longer advantageous for either church or state to trace their history back to a purely Teutonic origin. Whilst the long acknowledged connection between Anglo-Saxons and their Teutonic ancestors was not fully rejected, claiming an exclusively Germanic past was no longer politically or socially advantageous. The following section describes the results of the political environment on the practice of early medieval archaeology in the early twentieth century.

The Great Wars and the End of Teutonism

The relationship between Britain and Germany at this time has been studied from a variety of perspectives. All trace the shift from the English bond of common heritage and shared values in the nineteenth century to the bitter animosity that resulted from the First and Second World Wars. Social historians and literary scholars have written several books on the subject, the titles of which give some indication of their contents; *The Death of the German Cousin* (Firchow 1986), *Best of Enemies* (R. Milton 2007) and *Don't Mention the War* (Ramsden 2006) are amongst the most widely cited. Despite this scholarly interest in the changing relationship between the two countries, a full analysis of the impact of the deterioration of the close bond of the nineteenth century on the study of Anglo-Saxon antiquities has never been undertaken.

Although the Victorian Anglo-Saxonism of the previous generation certainly extended into the early twentieth century to some extent, it must be noted that this was not a particularly vibrant time in the study of the Anglo-Saxon past. It was, however, an important phase in the development of archaeology more generally. During this period, it ceased to be politically or socially desirable to trace English culture back to a Germanic root: in fact, it began to be seen as unpatriotic (Howsam 2009: 76). There was a small minority of the British population that supported Nazi policies, as the historian Richard Griffiths has shown (Griffiths 1980: 10-1), but the overall mood was generally one that was aimed at creating distance.

By the early twentieth century, the past confidence of both English and German scholars that the source of all human dignity and political independence lay in the evidence of the primitive Germanic sources strained the credulity of even the most casual political observer (MacDougall 1982: 128). Young has traced the decline of Teutonism back to the mid-nineteenth century, when it became one of several possible English pasts, some of which included far more emphasis on the Roman occupation (Young 2008: 170). This was only exacerbated by the global political situation at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the years leading up to the First World War, and certainly after it began, it became more important to emphasize the unique nature of the Anglo-Saxon character and its distance and difference from the Germanic past. During and after the World Wars, one of two options was possible: either to see the Anglo-Saxons as fully distinct from their Germanic cousins, or to situate the origin of the British in the Roman past instead. In the trenches of the First World War, as the historian Paul Fussell documented in his monumental book, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, the emphasis was on the Roman military campaigns, the legend of King Arthur, Shakespeare's depiction of the Battle of Agincourt, even the American Civil War (Fussell 1975: 144-45) but not on the Anglo-Saxon past.

It was not simply a case of British reluctance to associate themselves with the history of their enemy, but also an attempt on the part of Germany to establish itself as the "exclusive recipient and principle protector of the ancient Teutonic inheritance" (MacDougall 1982: 129). The use of the pre- and proto-historical past to support German racist policy and ideologies became common following the work of Gustaf Kossinna (1858-1931) in the late nineteenth century and strengthened following the Nazi takeover in 1933 (Haßmann 2000: 67, 76). The partition of Britishness from Teutonism thus evolved from within both British and German academic schools, each keen to define themselves in opposition to each other (Wallace 1988: 62-3). To some extent this was a

question of syntax: the meaning of the term 'Anglo-Saxon' became de-coupled from its implied Teutonism and began to instead carry a uniquely English character, shifting the emphasis from Germanic origins to an independent English identity.

Within British archaeology, this rejection manifested itself in both over-arching theories about the origins of the English, as well as in small-scale interpretations of individual artefacts. Where it had previously been crucial to emphasize the connection of the British Anglo-Saxon population to the modern Germanic monarchy as we have seen in previous chapters, it suddenly became much less desirable to point out the Teutonic ancestry of the royal family. Prior to his abdication, Edward VIII had expressed admiration for Nazi Germany, a fact that many attributed to the influence of Wallis Simpson (Griffiths 1980: 241). Beginning with the reign of George V, the monarchy generally sought to distinguish themselves from their familial connections with the Emperors of Germany and Russia and the Kings of Greece, Spain, Denmark and Norway, and to focus their attention within Britain (Douglas-Home 2000: 37). Long gone were the days of dedicating books about the Teutonic past to the Germanic monarch in order to prove and reinforce the long-standing nature of the connection between the two countries.

This shift in perception can clearly be seen in dialogues on Anglo-Saxon scholarship. Thomas Downing Kendrick (1895-1979), Keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities at, and eventually director of, the British Museum (Bruce-Mitford 1991: 445), described Anglo-Saxon material culture in language that portrayed it as rough and amateurish (Kendrick 1938: 61), whilst also arguing for it as a continuing expression of Roman and Celtic design and only loosely related to Germanic examples (Kendrick 1938: 64). Kendrick's seminal study, *Anglo-Saxon Art to A.D. 900* was published in 1938 and it must be seen as a reflection of the time and place in which it was produced. As it became less important to emphasize the Teutonic ties to British identity, an alternate origin narrative developed which traced the same national qualities that previously been seen the legacy of the Anglo-Saxons to the Roman imperial population. As Hingley has shown, the Roman past as an origin story had always been a part of the British historical framework, but it had long taken second place to the Teutonic narrative (Hingley 2000: 63). This began to change as the emphasis on the Teutonic past faded.

As early as 1944, however, V. Gordon Childe was arguing for a less reactionary response to Nazi archaeology, stating that "German theory and interpretations must be treated with reserve, and carefully distinguished from the facts that German science – I mean, science in Germany – has brought to light" (Childe 1944: 6). Childe was very strongly

opposed to both Nazi policies and their influence on archaeology and was one of the few archaeologists who was vocal in his disapproval (Díaz-Andreu 2009: 97). However, he wrote that the objective nature of artefacts “fits them to the basis for international co-operative study in a way that the characters of political, military or ecclesiastical history can never be” (Childe 1944: 7). For Childe, it was possible to strip away the layers of Nazi interpretation and get back to the objects themselves, the raw data, which no ideology could taint. Here again the archaeology was valorized as a means to move beyond nationalistic polemic and ethnic boundaries and create an international or world archaeology that would be both scientific and apolitical.

The emergence of a concept of human history and a past that included multiple lines of ancestry had implications not only for historians and archaeologists, but also for the anthropologists studying biological expressions of race. In 1920, Karl Pearson wrote:

...what we know historically of folk-wanderings, folk-mixings, and folk-absorptions have undoubtedly been going on for hundreds of thousands of years, of which we know only a small fragment. Have we any real reason for supposing that “purity of race” existed up to the beginning of history, and that we have all got badly mixed up since? (Pearson 1920: 454).

Racist archaeology, a hallmark of nineteenth-century attitudes, came to an end, but this was not the end of racism in archaeology. The phrenological and morphological work that had been done in the early Victorian period began to drop from fashion. This reflected the changing ideas regarding the biology of race which were taking place on a global scale at the end of the Second World War. Despite strident support by many within Britain, including Captain George Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers (1890-1966), grandson of the first Inspector of Monuments, who was a life-time member of the Eugenics Society (Griffiths 1980: 323); by 1950, eugenics had been rejected in scientific and anthropological circles, due in part to its association with Nazism as well as the addition of more data that showed race to be much more complex and variable than it had previously been conceived (Graves 2002: 142-3).

This was part of a more wide-ranging transition within archaeological theory, discussed above, which saw the subject move towards the wider and increasingly dominant culture-historical approach which developed at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries (S. Jones 1997: 45). Influenced by anthropology, archaeology began to move away from physically or linguistically defined racial groups and toward the study of “cultures” defined by their material remains (S. Jones 1997: 48). The previous emphasis on the linguistic and racial relationship between the Germanic tribes and the Anglo-Saxons was superseded by classification and synthesis of the artefactual material,

defining Anglo-Saxon culture by its metalwork and pottery, as we have seen above, rather than its origins. This had the effect of, as Arnold argued, rendering the native British population nearly invisible, by creating a one-to-one relationship between Anglo-Saxon artefacts and Anglo-Saxon people (C. J. Arnold 1997: 9).

It was not only scholars of Roman Britain that benefited from the decrease in Teutonism, but also the post-Conquest medieval past (P. Hill 2006: 177-8). F.W. Maitland (1850-1906), the well-known medieval legal scholar and J.H. Round (1854-1928), a Norman historian, both writing at the turn of the twentieth century, emphasized the contributions of the Anglo-Norman population and the quality of historical evidence from the Domesday Book and other post-Conquest sources. Round's *Feudal England*, first published in 1895, was sharply critical of the work of E.A. Freeman, discussed in the previous chapter and much of the text is devoted to disputing the claims made in Freeman's various books and articles (Round 1895). Maitland even went so far as to challenge the long held belief that the origins of British democracy could be found in the Anglo-Saxon past, dismissing the early medieval assembly as "a small aristocratic body, tending always to become more aristocratic" (Maitland 1908: 58) and thus not recognizable as a democracy at all.

Many new theories were proposed to explain the origin of the English, some of which were more plausible than others. On the fringes of archaeology, there was even a resurgence of the idea of Phoenician origin of the British population. Popular during the early modern period, this idea reappeared in the writing of L.A. Waddell, who wrote that "The 'Anglo-Saxons' also were disclosed ... to be a later branchlet of the Phoenician-Britons, which separated after the latter had established themselves in Britain" (Waddell 1931: 14). As a member of the British colonial government in India who had spent much of his life studying South Asian antiquities, Waddell was ultimately concerned with tracing the origin of the English back through Phoenicia to ancient India. Claiming to have discovered the true identity of the Aryans (the Phoenicians) and to have found examples of Phoenician writing in inscriptions throughout the British Isles, Waddell argued for the historical truth of the story of King Brutus the Trojan (to his mind, a Phoenician), originally found in the writings of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Nennius, as the first settler of Britain (Waddell 1931: vii-iii). These texts, he wrote, had been "arbitrarily jettisoned aside by modern writers on early British history, obsessed with exaggerated notions of the Roman influence on Britain" (Waddell 1931: vii). Although there is no indication that this argument had any impact on the archaeological establishment, his book, *Phoenician Origin of the Britons, Scots & Anglo-Saxons*, went to

three editions, first in 1924, again in 1925 and finally in 1931. It is clear therefore that there must have been a market for this theory.

By 1949, the idea of multiple origins was firmly entrenched, as can be seen in a pamphlet entitled *War and Archaeology*, published by the Ministry of Works (1949: 23-4). This pamphlet provided an overview of archaeology as it stood in that year, and it included the assertion that the Britons were a part of the origin of England, although “there were many conflicts, and in due course much of the land became England rather than Britain, [...] there is reason to believe that there was room for both races and that often enough they lived peacefully side by side” (1949: 23). This pamphlet also exposed the connections that were drawn between the Germanic invasions of the late Roman period with those of the Second World War, stating in reference to a Roman house discovered in St Albans during the war, “The house was burnt down in A.D. 367, at a time when Germanic raiders were spreading destruction and alarm throughout Britain. Strangely enough, in February, 1944, during the course of the excavation, two German incendiary bombs fell into the cellar of the villa and burnt themselves out” (1949: 23).

This early twentieth century attitude toward the Anglo-Saxon past was perfectly summed up by D. Elizabeth Martin-Clarke, on leave from Oxford in 1945 and lecturing at Johns Hopkins University in the United States, where she declared that:

It is the realization that the Anglo-Saxons by their move into Britain are in the stream of several different cultures and that this is one of the controlling factors in their own artistic production that is so important. So we shall find that the cultures of the Romans, British, Irish, Scandinavians and Franks all play their part in the cultural activities of the Anglo-Saxons. Intersection of culture brings forth the new (Martin-Clarke 1947: 25)

The key here is not, as it had previously been, to legitimate an identity which had descended uncorrupted from the ancient Germanic past, but rather to show that the Anglo-Saxon material culture that she was lecturing about was the unique product of a combination of many cultural strands which had come together to form English culture.

This moment of change, which occurred between the turn of the twentieth century and the end of the Second World War, was extreme, but the new past which was created could not completely do away with what was now such an established origin story. Rather, it became expedient to see the past as a complicated intermingling of cultures, which, although it included some Teutonic aspects, had much stronger component parts which effectively drowned out the German influence. Where the previous generation had

written about their 'Teutonic ancestors', scholars of the early twentieth century termed them 'Teutonic invaders', thereby distancing them without erasing them. By allowing the Anglo-Saxon past to fade into darkness, the scholars of the day were de-emphasizing that which had previously been so important to emphasize - the convention that the English were the direct descendants of Teutonic tribes and acknowledgement that the royal family traced its roots to a much more recent Germanic origin.

The Archaeology of Conversion

The fading importance of the Teutonic past and increasing emphasis on the Romans as ancestors affected both the quantity and vibrancy of research on early medieval religion, both pagan and Christian (Content and Williams 2010: 194). In common with much of archaeology during this period, the studies of the Anglo-Saxon era which were undertaken focused on migration and settlement, in other words, where the Anglo-Saxons had come from and where they had ended up, rather than continuing the lines of enquiry into the origins of the modern church and legal system, which had been so popular in the previous period. The Conversion maintained its importance as a chronological marker, however, as the work of Nils Åberg shows. The presence of cross shapes were used here to provide a *terminus post quem* for Anglo-Saxon objects (Åberg 1926: 152).

Religion was a contentious issue for archaeologists, especially amongst the prehistorians of the day. In the early twentieth-century quest for a more scientific archaeology, many had rejected the Christian faith and maintained instead a more-or-less orthodox Darwinism (Stout 2008: 116). Others, such as Cyril Fox, Grahame Clark and Christopher Hawkes remained committed Christians, and Eliot Curwen, the author of *Prehistoric Sussex*, remained a Creationist and a believer in the chronology of Bishop Ussher (Stout 2008: 116). Atheists and Christians alike were able to agree, however, that prehistoric religion had been a deeply unpleasant and bleak way of seeing and interacting with the world (Stout 2008: 117).

The 1935 edition of the *Map of Britain in the Dark Ages* reflected a continuing focus on the religion of the period. Many of the sites included are religious in nature, either bishop's sees, churches, barrows, pagan cemeteries or early place-names which include the names of pagan gods (O. G. S. Crawford 1935). This certainly reflects both the types of places that are recorded in the textual evidence and the bias toward the excavation of pagan grave sites, as well as a serious lack, at this time, of evidence for settlement or any other

non-funerary remains. The dating of these pagan cemeteries was such a concern that the introduction includes a note stating:

In the first decade of the 8th century, every English kingdom contained a bishop's seat, and Christianity had long been established in most parts of England: but pagan customs survived everywhere, long after the local king had accepted Christianity, and it is therefore impossible to fix a date after which interment in the heathen manner was finally abandoned (O. G. S. Crawford 1935: 9)

This emphasis on the role of kingship in conversion was a common one during this period. Stenton's chapter on the conversion includes the statement "There was no doubt that the attitude of each local king determined the date at which Christianity reached his people" (Stenton 1943: 127); it is clear that by this time the idea of a top-down conversion had become firmly established.

The majority of the work done on the conversion during this period focused on the art of the early church and its contrast to the pagan art of the previous period. As J. Romilly Allen stated, "Any cause, such as a religion, which produces a radical change in the ideas of a nation, must necessarily have a powerful effect upon the outward expression of those ideas in art. Religion can create, modify, or destroy the art of a particular country, but can never leave it in the same condition as it was previously" (J. R. Allen 1889: 143). The scholars of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century were committed to understanding the artistic and stylistic transition that came about as the result of religious change.

For some, this change in art was seen as a complete and relatively instantaneous transition. R. A. Smith, in his guide to the Anglo-Saxon antiquities held at the British Museum argued that, after AD 670, only Anglo-Saxon sculpture was available for study, because "The heathen practice of depositing weapons and ornaments with the dead consequently ceased about the middle of the century and burials were henceforth confined to the consecrated ground of the churchyard" (R. A. Smith 1923: 12-3). Although primarily a prehistorian, Smith was keeper of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities at the British Museum, a position that presumably required some familiarity with the Anglo-Saxon remains held in that collection. He does not argue, as others had previously done, that the practice of burial with objects ended all together, only that, as one would never intentionally disturb consecrated ground, artefacts from Christian graves could only be the result of accidental discoveries (R. A. Smith 1923: 13).

J. Romilly Allen was also interested in the changes to the architectural forms that resulted from the Conversion, which he saw as extremely significant in uniting Europe. This shift had, he wrote, “remove[d] the barrier which had shut out Ireland from intercourse with the rest of Europe during the fifth and sixth centuries, and thus gradually to assimilate the character of the ecclesiastical buildings to that existing in other parts of Christendom” (J. R. Allen 1889: 88). Allen’s work is unusual in the sense that it was not common for scholars of this time to consider the impact of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion on the wider early medieval world.

One of the most influential studies carried out during this period was undertaken by the archaeologist and museum director Cyril Fox (1882-1967), who, in his landmark study of the archaeology of Cambridgeshire, devoted a chapter to pagan burials and grave goods, but who wrote of the material from the mid-seventh century to 1066, “Remains known to be of this period in the Cambridge Region are almost entirely monumental – churches and sculptures grave-slabs and crosses; and such are excluded from consideration in this book” (Fox 1923: 297). This betrays a disinclination to view the historical medieval past as the appropriate subject for archaeological research; archaeology, for Fox, was relevant only to understanding the prehistoric and therefore pagan past.

An important figure in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon period was George Forrest Browne (1833-1930), who was both Bishop of Bristol and Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge (Moreland 2003: 150). As a senior member of the clergy of the Church of England, Browne was embroiled not only in the key theological debates of the day, but also the archaeological dialogue surrounding early medieval remains (Moreland 2003: 150). These must be seen as two sides of the same coin; his study of English Christianity covered a long period, but cannot be separated or compartmentalized. His work on early Christianity, especially his choice of which sites to study, was heavily influenced by his religious background and knowledge of the religious and historical texts (G. F. Browne 1915: 199).

This can be seen in his analysis of the Bewcastle and Ruthwell crosses, published in 1916 (G. F. Browne 1916). Much of this text is concerned with dating these monuments (and others, including the Sandbach crosses), and arguing against previous scholars who had claimed a date in the twelfth century (G. F. Browne 1916: 7). Browne favoured a date in the mid-seventh century and devoted much of his text to proving that it could not be otherwise. These monuments were proof that “as each kingdom of the heptarchy adopted the new faith, building and carving and other arts rose from the ashes to which the pagan

English had reduced them, and some kingdoms rose so rapidly and to such heights that we have a right to feel proud of our far-off ancestors” (G. F. Browne 1916: 19). For Browne these crosses, with their allusions to the scriptures, were “teaching crosses” or items which set forth the contents of the New Testament for the education of the newly converted (G. F. Browne 1916: 12-3).

Browne also wrote a book on *The Importance of Women in Anglo-Saxon Times*, in which he emphasized the role of women in the Conversion and early Christian religious life (G. F. Browne 1919b: 15-21). He attributes this to the power held by women in Teutonic and Celtic pagan societies, citing Tacitus and Plutarch as his sources (G. F. Browne 1919b: 11-12). Women had brought about the conversion of many of the Anglo-Saxon kings, and therefore their kingdoms, mostly through marriage (G. F. Browne 1919b: 15). Browne cites Bede to show that the female royalty of the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had led their male counterparts in both their desire for religious education and their commitment to the pious life (G. F. Browne 1919b: 16). The educational role of Christian Anglo-Saxon women was particularly interesting to Browne, and led him to suggest that this might be an example that should be followed in the twentieth century, stating that “The preparation of boys for a public school life might with great advantage be put into the hands of women with University training” (G. F. Browne 1919b: 24).

G. Baldwin Brown, who was the Watson Gordon Professor of Fine Art at the University of Edinburgh, is well known for his contributions to architectural and archaeological understandings of the Anglo-Saxon past (Miele 2000: 211). He wrote that “The existing fragments of pre-Conquest architecture are curious rather than beautiful, and their directly aesthetic importance is small. They are however of extreme historical interest, because they form for us an effective visible link with the religion and social life of Saxon England” (G. B. Brown 1903b: 33). In his comprehensive multi-volume text, *The Arts in Early England*, Brown recognized three types of early Christian buildings which made up his architectural history of the period, “(1) the remains, if any exist, of Romano-British churches prior to the Saxon invasion; (2) structures built and used by Celtic Christians in the non-Romanized parts of the islands; (3) Saxon churches erected subsequent to the conversion of the invaders” (G. B. Brown 1903a: 2). From this evidence, Brown concluded that “the Christianity of Gaul and Britain was at first independent of Rome, and in touch rather with the East” (G. B. Brown 1903a: 17). Brown rejected Rome’s role in the earliest conversions, stating that Christianity “was not indigenous at Rome. In this case Rome was colonized by the adherents of a religion that had its origin centres over the East, and Christianity radiated from these original centres over the Empire along lines that by no

means necessarily passed through Rome” (G. B. Brown 1903a: 13-4). The site of Silchester, which had recently been excavated, was important to Brown’s argument on this subject. A building had been discovered on that site which could be confidently identified as a Roman church and “not a mere room in a private house but an independent structure that, although small, is fully in evidence, and holds its place boldly by the side of the recognized urban edifices of the municipality” (G. B. Brown 1903b: 145). This he compared to some North African parallels, and finding them to be similar, concluded that both must have been inspired by Eastern examples, rather than the influence of Rome and the Pope. The Celtic examples of ecclesiastical architecture, on the contrary, maintained a much more indigenous character as far as Brown was concerned. The form of the earliest Irish Christian structures, such as the cells on Skellig Michael, may have been “employed for Christian purposes, but the form can be followed far back into pagan times” (G. B. Brown 1903a: 19).

For Brown, Anglo-Saxon churches were thus influenced by pre-existing indigenous religious structures which existed prior to the arrival of the Saxons and also drew upon Germanic influences, or as he puts it, “Anglo-Saxon work belongs to the German rather than the French connection” and “The debt of our pre-Conquest builders to the lands across the North Sea may be freely acknowledged, while at the same time full justice is done to the substantial amount of originality and boldness in our native productions” (G. B. Brown 1903a: 69). This, as we have seen, can be related to the increasingly complex view of English racial origins that was becoming widespread amongst historians and archaeologists.

It is in Brown’s characterization of the Irish missions that we begin to see the idea that secular politics may have influenced the choice of individuals targeted for conversion. He stated that:

A Patrick or a Colomanus, penetrating with his companions for the first time a pagan religion, would endeavour if possible to obtain a favourable reception at the hands of the local sovereign or princeling. If such a one embraced the new religion, the conversion of the members of his household and of the leading men of the tribe followed as a matter of course, and the way was opened for missionary efforts directed towards the people at large (G. B. Brown 1903b: 154).

The conception of the Conversion as a “top-down” decision, which could be seen as politically advantageous on either a local or inter-tribal level, is an idea that permeated later twentieth-century theories about the Conversion (see Chapter Seven). This secularized model of conversion, which would become so key to modern understandings,

was already, in Brown's work, fully articulated when it was first published in 1903. When it comes to the Augustinian mission, however, Brown follows Bede in identifying the Conversion as a spiritual rather than a political decision (G. B. Brown 1903b: 164-5).

Brown devoted two volumes, between them equaling more than 800 pages, to *Saxon Art and Industry in the Pagan Period*. Arguing against what he saw as a "British national idiosyncrasy" which led his contemporaries to a position where, "They do not despise the practice of the arts, but on the contrary they glorify it, while at the same time they refuse to credit their countrymen, past or present, with any special ability in this department, or if they are driven to admit ability, they confine it to the Celtic element in our population" (G. B. Brown 1915: 4). It was important for him, therefore, to establish the artefactual remains of the pagan period as the work of "homestaying Anglo-Saxon craftsmen" (G. B. Brown 1915: 6), although he continues with the statement that "Germanic art as a whole is not an absolutely original product, but at the same time the non-Teutonic elements were so modified by the racial genius that they took on a Germanic character, and the resulting art stands out as a distinct aesthetic entity" (G. B. Brown 1915: 6). To draw a line that divided pagan from Christian Anglo-Saxon art was not something that Brown could easily achieve, because of an overlap in styles for almost a century (G. B. Brown 1915: 19-20). He explicitly acknowledged a fact that many of his predecessors had struggled with, writing "As a matter of strict logic Christians should have been interred without grave furniture, but as a fact the habit of clothing and equipping the corpse was only by very slow stages relinquished" (G. B. Brown 1915: 20). Unlike past scholars, however, he was able to compare these furnished graves with continental parallels and find that it was also the case in Europe (G. B. Brown 1915: 170-1).

Brown's view of the pagan past, like that of nearly all of his contemporaries, derived primarily from funerary material. Whilst the volumes on Christian art focus heavily on architecture and specifically church buildings, the volumes devoted to the pagan period exclusively use grave goods to describe the pagan past. Whether this is a reflection of the fact that (prior to the invention of radiocarbon dating) the only way to date material to the pagan period was to discover it within a recognizably pagan grave, or whether this was merely a reflection of the number of barrows that had been opened and plundered during the nineteenth century is unclear.

Brown's interest in the burial customs of the early medieval period was shared by many, including A. Hadrian Allcroft (1865-1929), who published *The Circle and the Cross: A Study in Continuity* in two volumes in 1927 and 1930 (Allcroft 1927, 1930). In these volumes,

Allcroft argued that the circular churchyards of Britain were in fact barrow burials that had been added to by later generations (Allcroft 1927: 7, 10). This, he claimed, was evidence of continuity of a form of burial practice that had originated prior to the arrival of the Romans and continued until at least the tenth century (Allcroft 1927: 25). Allcroft's aim was to show that the Celtic church, rather than the Anglo-Saxon church, had played the most important role in the conversion of the British Isles, a view that gained increasing support in Britain as the Victorian mania for the Anglo-Saxon past slowly faded (Bradley 1999: 168).

The reopening of the barrows at Sutton Hoo at the end of the 1930s and beginning of the 1940s (Carver 2011: 25-7) saw the issue of conversion come into focus in both the scholarly and popular imagination. This site, the importance of which for the study of the Anglo-Saxon past would be difficult to overstate, foregrounded the religion of an individual to an extent that had never previously been possible or indeed necessary. Almost from the first, the key question for the excavators of the site was, who was the man buried in the boat grave, surrounded by such luxurious objects? To answer this important question, scholars of the time used the textual evidence, in conjunction with both the datable coins and the mixture of Christian and pagan symbols present in the grave to suggest some possible candidates (H. M. Chadwick 1940: 82). This was not unproblematic; the numismatic evidence dated the burial to the mid- to late-seventh century, a time when, according to Bede, the conversion had already occurred in this part of England, leading Chadwick to question "Is it possible that a burial of this kind – and on this scale – could have taken place in Christian times?" (H. M. Chadwick 1940: 82).

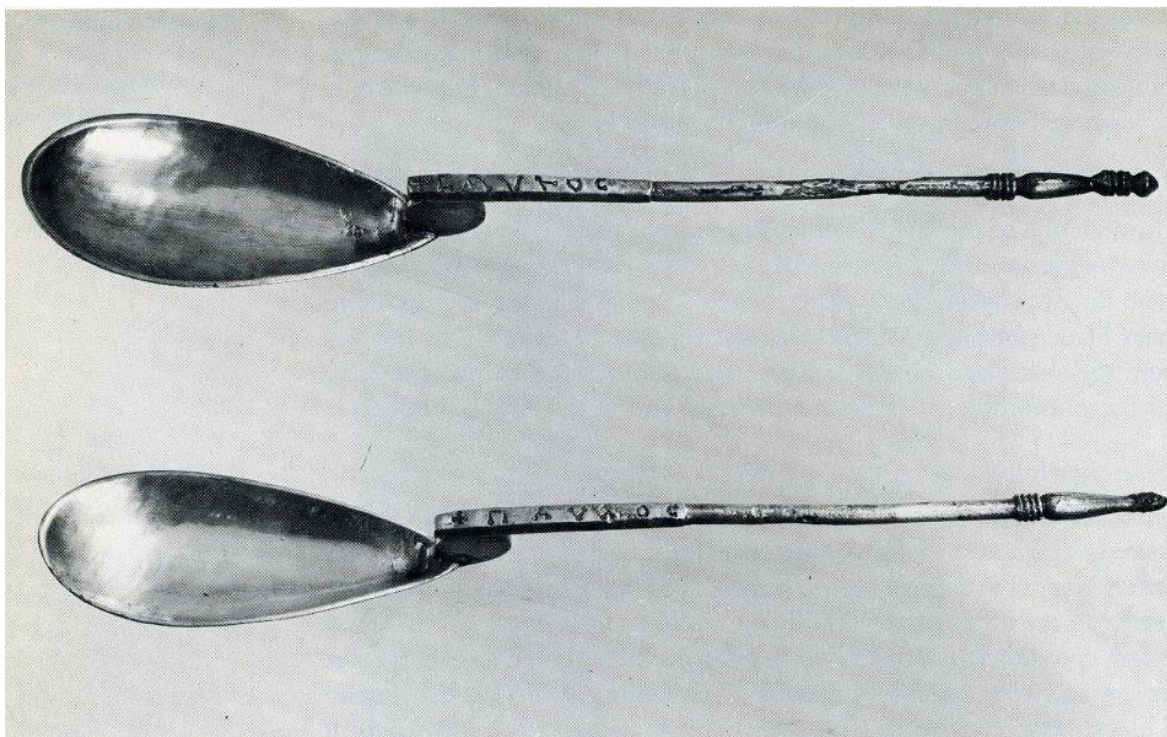


Figure 20: Saulos and Paulos spoons from mound 1 at Sutton Hoo (Bruce-Mitford 1947: 48)

Not only did the dates from the coins cast doubt on the chronology that had been passed down through the textual sources, but the presence of obviously Christian objects, such as the silver spoons with ‘Saulos’ and ‘Paulos’ stamped on them in Greek characters (Bruce-Mitford 1947: 24), in what was apparently such a clear example of a pagan burial tradition troubled the early scholars of the site. For Chadwick, this burial must have signaled “deliberate reversion to heathenism”, because, if the coins date the burial to post-A.D. 640, a Christian in East Anglia would not have had any trouble finding hallowed ground in which to be buried (H. M. Chadwick 1940: 84). The consensus in the 1940s appears to have been that the Sutton Hoo ship was a cenotaph for King Æthelhere and that it was buried in either A.D. 655 or 656 (Bruce-Mitford 1947: 42). Bruce-Mitford was happy to see this burial as the act of a Christian king who respected the wishes of a pagan predecessor, writing:

It may be that Æthelhere’s Christian brother and successor, with the tolerance that characterized the conversion, scrupled to respect Æthelhere’s beliefs and wishes regarding his entry into the future life; that the old heirlooms and treasures were felt to have a pagan taint, and that Æthelwald, burying them with his brother, felt himself presiding at the winding-up of the pagan age; and no doubt the well-stocked treasury, having been spared the drain of pagan funerals for the last three monarchs, could well stand the loss (Bruce-Mitford 1947: 43).

Chadwick, however, wrote that the date suggested by the coinage is too late and that the burial was most likely that of Raedwald, who was believed to have died in A.D. 624 (H. M. Chadwick 1940: 87). This identification appears to be mainly based in his

disinclination to believe that a pagan burial could have been undertaken at such a late date (H. M. Chadwick 1940: 86-7). The question of who was commemorated by the Sutton Hoo boat burial is one which has occupied historians from its discovery to the present day (see Campbell 1992: 80-3 for an overview), but is a quest that was essentially abandoned by archaeologists as medieval archaeology came of age in the late twentieth century.

The case of Sutton Hoo revealed how long-held ideas about the material effects of the conversion and the accuracy of the textual evidence came into conflict with the actual material evidence from a single site. Conversion can be seen again here as a chronological marker, but it is here that the simplistic image of the Conversion, accepted for generations, already under pressure from various quarters, began to show its real weaknesses. The discovery of Sutton Hoo also changed the scholarly perspective on the text of *Beowulf*. In 1935, prior to the discovery of the boat burial with its grave goods, Ritchie Girvan had written:

I am protesting against the view that *Beowulf* carries us directly to the German pagan past, and I shall endeavour to show that little or no trustworthy evidence of life and manners in the migration period, as distinct from later time, can be derived from the poem. Something certainly it owes to tradition, but when we ask for positive detail, the family touch of personal knowledge is absent; we find only hints and suggestions, and these not seldom misunderstood (Girvan 1935: 27).

Although there had been previous studies of the relationship between *Beowulf* and Scandinavian archaeological remains (see Stjerna 1912), the discovery in Britain of what appeared to be material proof, at least for the funeral scenes, allowed Girvan's bold statement to be countered by a generation of scholars.

By 1935, ideas about pagan burials had begun to change dramatically, however, as can be seen in the work of E.T. Leeds. In his publication of the series of Rhind Lectures which he had given at Edinburgh University, he wrote that the reliance on the works of Gildas and Bede had led to an undue amount of importance being given to the Augustinian mission (Leeds 1936: 96). He challenged the long-held beliefs that east/west orientation and the absence of grave-goods could be seen as fail-safe indications of the religion of the person buried in the grave (Leeds 1936: 96). He saw this as a problem which had come about because of an unquestioning acceptance of the biased views held by Gildas and Bede about the status of Christianity in Britain between the Roman period and the first Anglo-Saxon migrations (Leeds 1936: 96).

Leeds also saw the Conversion as an important factor in patterns of Anglo-Saxon settlement, stating that “the missionaries commissioned by the Roman Catholic church with the conversion of the heathen Teutonic tribes, would naturally arrive imbued with all the traditions of the Roman occupation, and would thus seek to establish themselves at centres in which the Roman atmosphere could most easily be revived” (Leeds 1913: 21). This echoed the work of John Beddoe, who had been concerned with whether “Romano-British” populations had remained in Roman cities after the Anglo-Saxon population arrived (Beddoe 1885 [1971]: 64-5). He stated that, whilst for some sites “there is evidence that the natives and the invaders dwelt together for a while; but in these cases and in others...the Christian religion died out, and the churches were either destroyed, or were no longer recognized as such; for when Christianity was reintroduced into London, Canterbury, and York, it was necessary to build new churches” (Beddoe 1885 [1971]: 64). It was Leeds who ultimately popularized the notion of ‘Final Phase’ cemeteries, first introduced by T.C. Lethbridge in

As a result of the increasing interest in establishing a Roman past in Britain, the pre-Anglo-Saxon conversion was once again emphasized. In Cyril Fox’s *Archaeology of the Cambridge Region*, published in 1923, he stated that “When we lost sight of Roman Britain at the beginning of the V century it was a wealthy and civilized country with a uniform culture...when, in 597, contact with the south was re-established we find the greater part of the country occupied by a number of semi-barbaric Teutonic kingdoms” (Fox 1923: 237). Fox presents us here with an image of post-Roman England as dark and wild, only brought back into the fold after 597, when Roman Christianity arrives to cast light upon it once again. This is a variation on the common theme of using the Conversion as a time marker between two periods; in Fox’s version, it marks the shift between the barbarism of the Anglo-Saxon period and the reconnection of the Roman Empire with its lost colony.

Some, such as J.N.L. Myres, rejected the early legends, especially those of King Lucius and Joseph of Arimathea, but supported the general principle that Roman Christianity was widespread in Britain (R. C. Collingwood and Myres 1937: 270). The Christianity of the Romano-British population was characterized as the result of a “bottom-up” rather than “top-down” conversion process (R. C. Collingwood and Myres 1937: 305). Myres also distinguishes between the Romano-British conversion as an urban phenomenon, whereas “the Anglo-Saxon were, in fact, pagans in both senses of the word, men whose vision of life in peace-time was limited to the bare satisfaction of physical needs by the cultivation of the land, and whose primitive notions of social and domestic comfort left no

room for the economic and architectural complexity of town life” (R. C. Collingwood and Myres 1937: 436). Comparatively little space is given in this lengthy volume to the Anglo-Saxon conversion, although it is covered. The pagan Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of London are portrayed as “no survivors of Roman Londinium, but a body of pagan Saxons squatting within the shelter of its walls” (R. C. Collingwood and Myres 1937: 436). In casting the pagan population as merely squatting in the ruins of the Roman occupation, and as rural individuals who avoided social interaction, the earlier Romano-British conversion becomes the more important one, the one that was made as an intellectual and civilized choice of past British inhabitants.

Content and Williams have suggested that although the Anglo-Saxon period was still being studied throughout the early twentieth century, the nature of Anglo-Saxon paganism was “too closely connected to pan-Germanic Aryan fantasies to tolerate close attention” (Content and Williams 2010: 194). In 1943, however, Hilda Ellis Davidson (1914–2006) published her Ph.D research on the conception of the dead in Old Norse literature, a study which connected Anglo-Saxon paganism to Scandinavian examples, based on the textual evidence (Davidson 1943: 12). Examples such as the ship burials at Snape and Sutton Hoo were an important part of her overview of the early medieval paganism of Northern Europe (Davidson 1943: 21–5). Davidson was not an archaeologist, but she used the archaeological material to inform her literary approach, especially where the material evidence could be seen to shore up a textual interpretation (Davidson 1943: 6).

More controversial was Davidson’s use of modern ethnographic parallels (Davidson 1943: 6, 50–1), an approach to the subject which reflected the feeling of the time that heathenism was somehow a unified state; that Christian and non-Christian were binary opposites. This attitude towards paganism was one that continued throughout the twentieth century, and can be seen especially in the ethnographically based studies of the New Archaeology. Davidson’s use of Anglo-Saxon archaeology to explain Scandinavian literature and ethnographic examples in her early work displays a certain amount of blurring of geographic and cultural boundaries. It must be noted that Davidson’s ideas developed over the course of her extremely long career and that her work did not maintain this attitude toward the pagan past in later years.

In other parts of the country, the analysis of the material of conversion was also developing and expanding beyond the grave goods. Bradley has argued that the early part of the twentieth century saw the first of two important resurgences of interest in the

history of the Celtic Church (Bradley 1999: 157). In Wales, Victor Erle Nash-Williams (1987-1955) spent twenty years studying the early medieval stone sculpture and inscribed stones, which he saw as “contemporary records of the conversion of Wales to Christianity and the establishment and development of the “Celtic” church” (Redknap 1998: 397). Nash-Williams recorded a large corpus of all of the known examples and divided them into four typological categories still essentially used in Wales today (Redknap 1998: 398-9). Nash-Williams and his contemporaries in Wales, Scotland and Ireland began to pull the history of Christianity in the British Isles away from the Anglo-Saxon centre and towards the Celtic margins (Bradley 1999: 120), meaning that not only was the Anglo-Saxon racial and cultural origin myth being challenged during this period, but also the Anglo-Saxon Christian origin myth.

In summary, despite the focus of this period being mostly on the question of migration, there were some changes in the way that the Conversion was represented during this period. The boat burial at Sutton Hoo, especially as interpreted through the text of *Beowulf*, brought the religion of an individual to the fore in a way that had never before occurred. Interpreting it challenged the established notions about both artefactual and textual material and required a radical rethinking of the way both were treated. What is notably different from the previous period, however, is the lack of any attempt at a connection between Anglo-Saxon Christianity and the contemporary church, something that had been pervasive in the literature of the early eighteenth century.

Text and Archaeology

The early twentieth century saw an increased emphasis on the potential for historical archaeology to act as a testing ground for hypotheses about prehistoric archaeology. In the 1930s, the idea that the Domesday Book and the archaeological record could be compared to provide more information about the time of the Norman Conquest and before was superseded by the thought that, through comparison, prehistorians might have a scientific way of knowing how many of their hypotheses about the prehistoric past were in fact correct (C. F. Hawkes 1937: 68). In other words, if a hypothesis made about the historical past from the archaeological record was found to be supported by the historical texts, it could be assumed that a similarly formulated hypothesis about the prehistoric past could be considered true. Historical archaeology, then, was put in the position of being not only the handmaiden of history, but also of prehistory.

The historian D. Elizabeth Martin-Clarke, mentioned above, made the position of archaeology during this period clear when she defined it as:

a handmaid to literature in enabling the student to read the actual texts of Old English literature more accurately, and to ascertain more fully the literary sources; it is a handmaid to history in that it helps with the historical problems of the period, i.e. the invasion of Britain by the Anglo-Saxons, the identity of the Jutes, etc.; it is a handmaid to language, for it throws a little light on that obscure period when the English first landed in Britain (Martin-Clarke 1947: 6)

In many ways the relationship between texts and material culture remained the same as it had been in the previous century. The British Museum's *Guide to Anglo-Saxon Antiquities*, published in 1923, begins not with a description of the objects but with a summary of the textual history, including Bede, Gildas, Nennius and focusing especially on *Beowulf* (R. A. Smith 1923). The concern at this time was, as we have seen above, primarily with the migration, and the textual evidence for it was laid out in some detail before any objects are described (R. A. Smith 1923: 1-6).

The interaction between text and archaeology in the case of Sutton Hoo is unique in the way in which a circular relationship has been created in which the text of *Beowulf* has been called upon to describe the site and the archaeological material has been used to illustrate the poem (Frank 1992: 47-8). As we have seen in the previous chapter, after 1815, the text of *Beowulf* became the primary tool for explaining pagan Anglo-Saxon archaeology, especially the weapons and burials that were discovered. Beginning in the 1940s, excavation reports and popular culture representations alike quoted or mentioned the parallels to the funeral scenes in *Beowulf* (Frank 1992: 49). Although investigating the date and identity of the burial was done through the use of Bede and the Chronicles (H. M. Chadwick 1940), understanding the what it was and what it meant had to be done through a text which described pagan practice.

G.F. Browne, whose work is described above, was interested not only in the content of Bede's work, but also in the conditions under which it was created (G. F. Browne 1919a). Through experimentation he discovered that, using "modern fluid ink and steel-nib pens, [and] a very facile hand, pressing only just hard enough on the paper to make a legible mark", the entirety of the Ecclesiastical History could be copied in a matter of six hundred hours (G. F. Browne 1919a: 96-7). The medieval version, he calculated, must have taken much longer to produce. Browne's archaeological work was influenced heavily by having studied the life and works of Bede, and Browne held the texts of Bede almost as sacred as the Biblical texts that he also used. In his exploration of the Bewcastle and

Ruthwell crosses, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* is used to provide everything from dates for the origin of the monuments, to an author for the runic inscriptions, to information about the names and personalities of the individuals who may have been involved in their production and placement (G. F. Browne 1916: 32, 48, 68, 84).

Conclusion

Prior to 1950, medieval archaeology was not yet a coherent and recognized subject (Gerrard 2003: xi) but rather the product of the intersection of various other disciplines, including, as has been demonstrated above, history, philology, art history, English literature, theology and others. This chapter has exposed the state of the subject at the moment in time when medieval archaeology can be said to have begun. The period explored in this chapter was a conflicted one for the study of the Anglo-Saxon past. In the period immediately following World War II, the study of the Anglo-Saxon past was, in a sense, seeking a new identity for itself, both as part of the newly reified discipline of 'medieval archaeology' and as part of a political landscape in which a connection to the Germanic past was more complicated and problematic than ever before.

Although this period has been seen as a relatively quiet period in the study of the Anglo-Saxon past, it is clear that ideas about the Conversion were advanced during the early twentieth century. The excavation of sites such as Sutton Hoo brought early medieval religion to the fore, presenting a complex set of religious symbols which raised questions that could not be ignored. Beyond these large-scale discoveries, the continued emphasis on the art and architecture of early Christianity during this period meant that understanding the conversion was key to the interpretation of the meaning behind the early Christian monuments. Text continued to play an important role in the archaeology of the conversion; Bede's works still formed the basis for all studies. The textual material had begun to be augmented, however, by an increasingly wide breadth of archaeological material.

Some progress had been made, especially in widening the field of study to include categories of archaeological evidence that went beyond the grave. From J. Romilly Allen's 1889 condemnation of the state of the discipline, 61 years of excavations and analyses had brought forth a much fuller picture of the nature of both pagan and early Christian religion. Modern archaeological approaches have gone on to further refine and contextualize this picture, but have never strayed far from the set of historical texts and the categories of archaeological evidence that were used by the archaeologists of the mid-twentieth century and before. When, in 1977, Brian Hope-Taylor published his important

report on the Anglo-Saxon palace site at Yeavinger, the newly excavated material related to the Conversion was easily accepted into the historical framework established throughout centuries of re-reading and re-working the words of Bede and little has been done since then to challenge assumptions which have been passed down from the eighth century.

Most of us at some point read Bede's great Historia Ecclesiastica sufficiently uncritically enough to concur with his approval of the decision of some king with a more or less unpronounceable name to accept baptism for himself and his people and to decry with him the failure of another to do the same. Christians are still good, and pagans bad, and Irish Christians are in some respects even better than the rest (Higham 1997: 3).

Chapter 7: 1950 to the Present Day

As Victorian religious nationalism has given way to multiculturalism, secularism and the rise of the European Union, attitudes toward the study of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion have changed substantially. With 50 percent of the British population now claiming no religious affiliation in the most recent British Social Attitudes Survey, and only 20 percent claiming membership in the Church of England (Park et al. 2012: 173), it is clear that personal and institutional religious beliefs are far less of a motivating factor for contemporary studies of the Anglo-Saxon past.

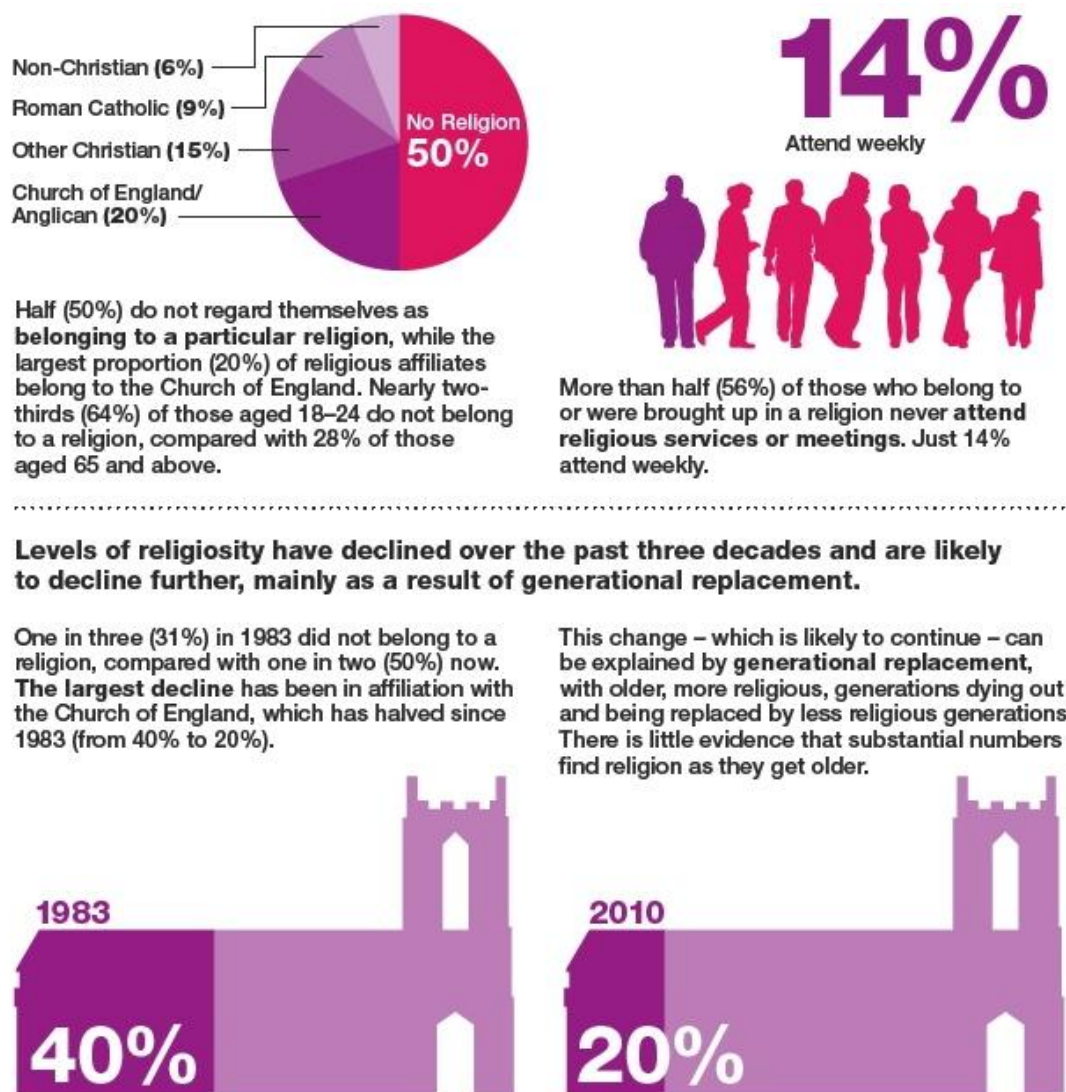


Figure 21: British religious affiliation (Park et al. 2012: 173)

The aim of this chapter is to bring the history of archaeological studies of the Conversion up to the present day and to explore the results of the long period of development contained in the previous chapters. This is perhaps the most difficult to assess period in this thesis, in part due to our proximity to it, but also because of the diversity and exponentially greater number of scholarly papers, monographs and journal articles published during this period in time. This increase necessitates a somewhat more selective approach to the material than that taken in the previous chapters.

This chapter takes as its central case studies two debates that, although they both originated in the 1930's, continued to be contested and discussed throughout the twentieth century and well into the twenty-first. First, the debate over 'Final Phase' cemeteries, introduced by T.C. Lethbridge and E.T. Leeds in the 1930's, but refined by Hyslop in the 1960's (Hyslop 1963) and Faull in the 1970's (Faull 1976) and discussed by scholars to this day as a useful model for understanding early Conversion Period burial practice. Second, the continuing discussion of the nature of the Sutton Hoo burial: who was buried there, what the objects contained within the grave signified and how this important site can be reconciled to the textual evidence from the period. These are ideal case studies for several reasons: they are examples of the abiding bias towards funerary remains inherent in the study of the Conversion, they exemplify the continuity of ideas and in both cases, the struggle of scholars to reconcile an expanding body of material culture to the well-rehearsed textual sources can be seen. Finally, they cover both ends of the spectrum of Conversion Period burial, the elaborate elite burials and the 'Final Phase', non-elite burials of the "common man". The use of case studies is apposite here not only because there is not enough space to rehearse in detail the huge amount of published material that has been produced since the end of the Second World War, but also because, by tracing the ongoing debates on these two subjects, we can see the ebbs and flows, the rises and falls, and the wider dialogue writ small in the specifics of each of these two crucial examples. The following section lays out the large-scale trends that may be observed in the period in question, but they can be seen most clearly when they are exemplified in the case studies which follow it.

Several authors cast the study of early medieval religion in a pessimistic light during this period. Eric Stanley's 1964 text (republished in 1965, 1975 and 2000), *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, has had a deep and widely felt influence on the study of early medieval religion. In it, he describes the "continuity of a critical attitude which

exalts whatever in the Germanic literature of the Dark Ages is primitive (that is, pagan), and belittles or even fails to understand whatever in it is civilized, learned, and cosmopolitan (that is, inspired by Christianity)” (Stanley 1975: 3). He concluded that Anglo-Saxon paganism was not only unknown but also unknowable and that the previous 150 years of scholarship had been naively and mistakenly biased towards the idea of a noble pagan past (Stanley 1975: 110).

More recently, John Hines challenged the notion that religion is at all comprehensible from the material record. For Hines, religion “resides in the mind of the doer of an act rather than in the act itself” (Hines 1997: 377), which inevitably means that we are left with material traces of actions for which we are unable to access the thought process. This echoes the well-known and oft-cited article by Christopher Hawkes in which he described a “ladder of inference” with questions of religion and belief at the top, as the most difficult thing to access through the archaeological record (C. F. Hawkes 1954). Whilst current scholarly trends would likely shy away from Hines’ conclusions that early Anglo-Saxon Christianity is “known” (Hines 1997: 396), his discussion on the deep and unbridgeable gap between the religion that exists within the mind of a person and our ability to see that religion in the archaeological record is a key issue. More recently, Ronald Hutton has similarly argued that early medieval religion is like a tin can for which we have no opener: our understandings of the subject are limited to the exterior of the can by the nature of the evidence (Hutton 2010: 202). Perhaps it is the essentially unknowable nature of the subject that leaves it open to such a variety of historically contingent interpretations. Would a subject for which the evidence was stronger allow for less external influence?

Since the end of the Second World War, the range of archaeological evidence that has been used to understand the Conversion expanded beyond graves and grave goods to encompass a wider range of evidence, including sculpture (J. Hawkes 1999), church buildings (R. Morris 1983, 1989) and aspects of the broader Anglo-Saxon landscape (Sam Turner 2006, especially Chapter Six). This reflects not only the ongoing expansion of the field of archaeology generally, but also, as we shall see below, the growing recognition that the impact of religious change was felt in all aspects of the lives of the Anglo-Saxon people. Although much of the focus remains on the funerary evidence, other types of evidence have begun to be considered. Additionally, the ease and frequency with which ideas, comparisons and interpretations travelled between Anglo-Saxon archaeologists and those working in

Scandinavia and on the Continent increased exponentially during this period, leading to a richer and more nuanced understanding of the early medieval period as a whole and early medieval religion specifically. The Scandinavian material especially, specifically the sites of Borg (A.-L. Nielsen 1997), Uppåkra (Hårdh 2000, 2002; Larsson 2001, 2002, 2006, 2007), Gudme (Hedeager 2001; P. O. Nielsen et al. 1994) and Gamla Uppsala (Gräslund 2000), has been crucial to the development of our current understanding of northern European paganism through comparison to other parts of northern Europe, including Anglo-Saxon England. Crucially, the Scandinavian material is now regularly published in English, making it more accessible to many British archaeologists than the work produced in France and Germany.

Post-War Approaches

For the first time, beginning in the 1950's, medieval archaeology became its own discrete sub-discipline of archaeology. Although we have seen that the origins of medieval archaeology can be found much earlier, the second half of the twentieth century saw the development of a formalized community of medieval archaeologists. In 1957, the Society for Medieval Archaeology was founded and the society began to publish their dedicated journal, *Medieval Archaeology* (Gerrard 2009b). In the more than 50 years since it was founded, Gerrard claimed, there have been “foundational contributions, institutional innovation and the development of powerful new techniques” (Gerrard 2009a: 79). Alongside the developing methodologies shared with the wider field of archaeology, the increased infrastructure and funding available during this period led to a surge in the number of sites being investigated and studies being published (Gerrard 2009a: 80, 87). Anglo-Saxon archaeology also profited from the increased attention and interest in the medieval past. Cemeteries and ecclesiastical buildings continued to be explored, but perhaps most crucially, settlement sites began to be excavated and the imbalanced excavation record, previously heavily weighted toward the funerary remains, began to move towards a more balanced understanding (Cramp 2009: 50).

The trend toward professionalization both in archaeology and in the wider culture, so clear in the early twentieth century (see Chapter Six), can be seen to continue to the present day. In the immediate post-war period, urban reconstruction and new development brought an unprecedented amount of material to the surface (Gerrard 2003: 98). Archaeology as a field responded to this challenge by becoming both more

specialized and more defined today than at any other period in its history. Since the origin of PPG 16 in 1990, the number of excavated sites has greatly increased and around 90% of all archaeological investigations in Britain have been carried out by commercial archaeology firms (Fulford 2011: 41). We have come a considerable distance from our antiquarian roots, in formalizing our discipline and distinguishing ourselves from historians, linguists, geographers, and others whose disciplinary origins lie, with ours, in the antiquarian tradition. The types of evidence used to understand the Anglo-Saxon period as a whole also expanded greatly after 1950 to include settlements, urban areas, church sites, large scale cemeteries, and environmental and scientific data (Cramp 2009; Dickinson 1983: 34), thus moving the focus away from the religious affiliation of individual graves and toward a more nuanced, holistic study of the Anglo-Saxon past.

Many changes took place in the field of Anglo-Saxon religious archaeology during the period after the end of World War II. Interest was uneven during this period, as we saw in the introduction to this thesis (especially Figure 4), and the 1970's were a particularly quiet moment in the study of the Conversion, although progress was made in other fields of Anglo-Saxon archaeology during this decade, including large cemetery sites such as those of Spong Hill in Norfolk (Hills 1977; Hills and Penn 1981; Hills et al. 1987, 1994; McKinley 1994; Penn and Brugmann 2007) and the publication of key settlement excavations such as Yeavering in Northumberland (Hope-Taylor 1977).



Figure 22: Extent of the excavated cemetery at Spong Hill, Norfolk (Hills et al. 1987: unpaginated)

Arguably the most important of these changes was the expansion of the dialogue to include a wider range of types of material evidence beyond the burial evidence that had been the focus of earlier studies. The fabric and location of early church buildings began to be considered as a key aspect of the material impact of the Conversion (Cramp 1969, 2005; E. Fletcher 1965; Gilmour 1979). Early Christian landscape use began to be addressed in terms of both its meaning and its relationship to the pagan landscape (Hooke 1987; R. Morris 1989; Sam Turner 2006). However, despite the widening of the field – as was the case with the previous generations of scholarship – much of the material related to early medieval religion tended to be studied as either wholly pagan or Christian, rather than as evidence of transition.

It was not until the late twentieth century that theories about the political utility of converting became important to the general scholarly consensus. Today it is commonplace to see the process of conversion as one which aligned various kings to the early medieval power centre of Rome, followed by a slower alignment of the non-elite populations with their ruling class. The amount of importance that different scholars placed on this aspect varies, but for some it was seen as the primary factor in the Conversion. This can be seen in the work of many authors, including Henry

Mayr-Harting (1972: 64-8), James Campbell (1986: 74-7), Nick Higham (Higham 1997: 1-2) and Barbara Yorke (2003: 243) who have argued for a conception of the Conversion as motivated by politics both inside and outside of England. This new narrative of the Conversion as power play is an answer to a question that was simply not posited prior to the middle of the twentieth century: why did individual people convert? Prior to 1950, this was simply not a part of the dialogue and there was an implication that it was much more difficult to understand why the conversion was not instantaneous or complete (see Chapter Five). It was the wide-spread secularization of British society in the second half of the twentieth century (see C. G. Brown 2006: 267) that facilitated the freedom to explore interpretations of the Anglo-Saxon conversion.

The introduction of the idea that this may have been a politically and economically expedient transition, although rejected by some as “naively Marxist” (Hines 1997: 402) and by others as reductionist (Kilbride 2000: 12), has opened up the discussion of the Conversion to potential interpretations that are not so heavily reliant on the revealed nature of religious belief. It is absolutely crucial to note that these ideas are just as socially dependent and culturally motivated as previous shifts in the study of the Conversion; the fact that it is a product of our contemporary secular milieu must not blind us to the fact that it is equally important to examine it with the same amount of scholarly reflexivity and healthy skepticism as earlier studies.

Not all recent scholarship remained neutral on the spiritual value of Conversion, however. Some scholars continue to make it clear that they view the Anglo-Saxon Conversion as progress out of backward, savage paganism. This can be seen in the writing of the historian Malcolm Lambert, who singles out Anglo-Saxon pagan faith as illogical, as if early Christianity was some sort of paragon of rational thought (Lambert 2010: xvi) and summarizes the Conversion period as “centuries of real change and improvements in people’s lives” (Lambert 2010: 301). This view of the Conversion as unequivocally positive would not have been out of place in any of the periods explored in the previous chapters, but it strikes a somewhat antiquated note in the post-post-modern atmosphere of early twenty-first century scholarship.

One of the key differences within modern understandings of the Conversion has been the conceptual reunification of Roman and post-Roman English Christianity as parts of the same process, previously divided by the Protestant establishment into separate Roman/Roman Catholic and Anglo-Saxon/proto-Anglican episodes. This can be

seen, for example, in the recent work of historian Malcolm Lambert, for whom the process of Christianization in Britain must be studied as a long slow process with setbacks rather than two or more discrete events (Lambert 2010). Similarly, the study of the Conversion began to be explored within its wider European context, as part of the larger process of conversion which enveloped this continent during the early medieval period. The concept of the ‘Celtic Church’, so long held up in contrast to the Anglo-Saxon church began to be challenged during this period, as scholars questioned the both the truth and the utility of such a concept (Davies 1992). These changes in conceptualization, when taken together, have radically altered notions about what the religious map of early medieval Europe looked like.

Scandinavian scholarship has been used to illuminate the Anglo-Saxon material since the early part of the twentieth century, through, for example, the work of Bernhard Salin on animal figures in art, a thread of research that has carried through to the current day (see Dickinson 2005; Pluskowski 2010). In the latter half of the twentieth century and particularly in the early twenty-first century, Anglo-Saxon archaeologists came to rely on Scandinavian scholars, whose wider range of textual sources and excavated sites gave them insight, particularly into the pagan past, that was lacking from our understanding of the British material. Key amongst the texts was Olaf Olsen’s *Hørg, Hov og Kirke*, published in 1966 in Copenhagen (Olsen 1966), but, crucially including an English summary of the key points of his arguments. Olsen investigated the long held belief that the earliest Danish churches, and indeed, the early churches in many other parts of Scandinavia, had been built on the foundations of pagan temples (Olsen 1966: 277). Ultimately he concluded that this was not the case, with the possible exception of the site of Gamla Uppsala, excavated in the 1940’s by Sune Lundqvist (Olsen 1966: 287, 88). The implications of this study for Anglo-Saxon included calling into question the long-held belief, rooted in Bede’s inclusion of Pope Gregory’s letter to Mellitus (see Chapter Two), that the pagan Anglo-Saxon population built temples which were subsequently replaced by the new Christian churches. Key pagan temple sites from Scandinavia that have been used as comparative examples are the sites of Borg (Munch 2003; A.-L. Nielsen 1997), Gamla Uppsala (Gräslund 2000) and Uppåkra (Hårdh 2000, 2002; Larsson 2001, 2002, 2006, 2007), amongst others. By providing us with a range of data about what the buildings that housed pagan cultic activity would have looked like, these studies gave the British archaeological establishment a potentially analogous data set.



Figure 23: The mounds at Gamla Uppsala as they appear today, photo courtesy of S. Semple

The comparison between the Scandinavian and the Anglo-Saxon material has been made by many scholars, but was drawn as part of a larger work comparing the conversion in Scandinavia and northern Europe, by Alexandra Sanmark in a historical and archaeological study entitled *Power and Conversion: A Comparative Study of Christianization in Scandinavia* (Sanmark 2004). Her study takes Anglo-Saxon England, Frisia, Saxony and Scandinavia together, as well as bringing in examples from Polynesian, Mayan and Aztec cultures in order to explore many of the issues covered in this thesis in a global context (Sanmark 2004: 20-1). Sanmark's text, however, was not received well and it was seen, especially within Scandinavian circles, as antiquated in its approach to the balance of textual and archaeological evidence (Gaimster 2006: 413-4).

Other comparative studies have been more successful, including Jenny Walker's analysis of early medieval halls as the site of ritual activity in Scandinavia and Anglo-Saxon England (Walker 2010). By comparing the various buildings at Yeavering with the sites of Uppåkra and Borg, Walker was able to assert that the location of pagan ritual was flexible and could have been held in the hall or in a separate temple structure, as long as it was performed in a location that was under the control of the elite of the local community (Walker 2010: 97).

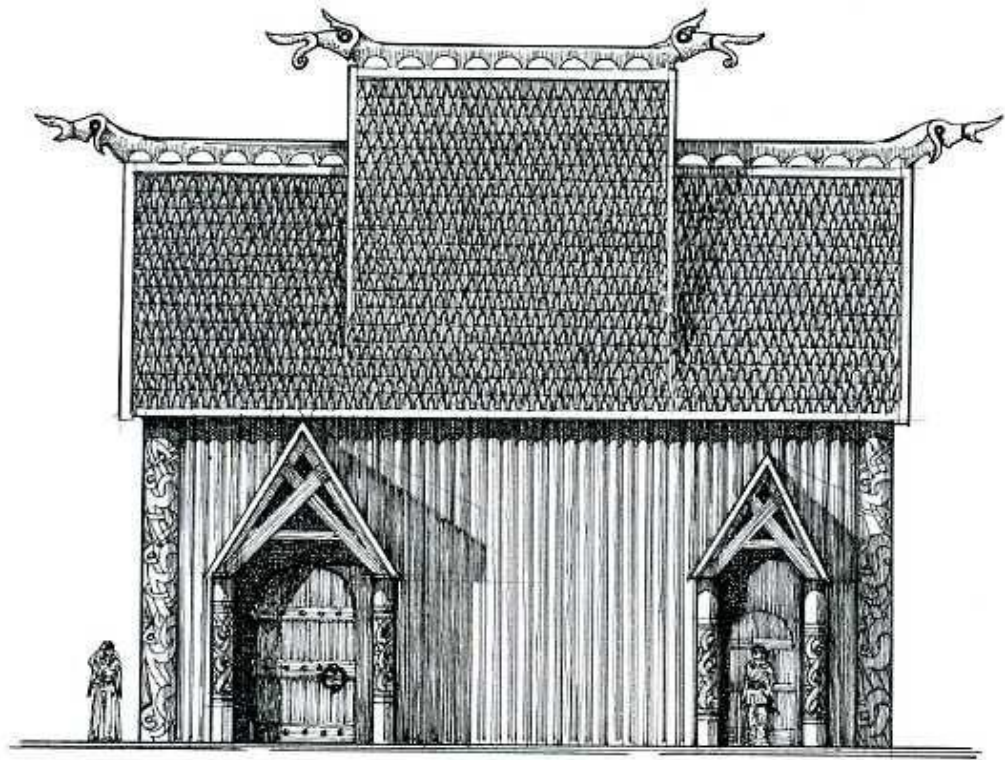


Figure 24: Reconstruction of the temple at Uppåkra by L  ic Lecareux (Walker 2010: 94)

In 1997, the theme of the International Medieval Congress in Leeds was Conversion, and the book published as a result of that conference, entitled *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals* (Armstrong and Wood 2000), displayed the very great geographical range of the studies conducted at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century. This collection of essays contained papers on the conversion not only of medieval Europe but also reaching to the farthest corners of the medieval worlds, including Asia and the Middle East. This conference and the resulting volume are an excellent indication of the global perspective adopted by scholars in the last few decades.

Despite the increasing number of types of evidence that are being used to understand the Conversion, there remains a focus on the funerary material, as can be seen in both the case studies below. Although Catherine Hills wrote “it has taken a long time to break down an expectation that a sharp dichotomy between pagan and Christian should be visible in the archaeological record, and to accept that belief may not be expressed in a simple, easily readable way in burial ritual” (Hills 2007: 18), I would argue that this expectation is still prevalent in scholarship to this day. Many archaeologists and historians remain committed to the idea that grave goods are the best way of accessing religion in the Anglo-Saxon period. Others have used the Anglo-Saxon burial record to understand questions of ethnic identity and the crucial relationship between the Anglo-Saxon population and the native Britons (Lucy 1998: 16-7). In a recent monograph on the

subject of the Anglo-Saxon Conversion, Marilyn Dunn not only argued for a continued scholarly focus on the burial material, but also that the Plague of Justinian (AD 541-2) had drawn the attention of the early medieval church toward questions of death and burial to an unprecedented degree (Dunn 2009: 192). Dunn's theory appears to be a simple case of projecting our concern with the burial record back into the past and justifying it by assigning it to the early medieval population.

Although church archaeology has most often been used to explicate some aspect of the established church and not the transitional period of the Conversion addressed in this thesis (see R. Morris 1983 for example), developments in the study of standing and excavated ecclesiastical buildings have been key to understanding the religious past of the early medieval period in England. Bombing during the Second World War and the subsequent steady decrease in church attendance, as explored above, have provided access to many churches that would not previously have been available to archaeological investigations. The well-known monastic sites of Wearmouth and Jarrow in County Durham in the North East of England exemplify the extraordinary influence of Bede and the reach of these texts in terms of shaping perceptions of these Christian sites by numerous stakeholders. These sites were, from the earliest recognition of the surviving pre-Conquest fabric, associated directly with the writings of Bede and the life of the man himself. The extensive excavations by Rosemary Cramp, dating from 1950 to 1988, and their final publication in 2005 (Cramp 2005: 15), revealed a remarkable insight into Christian life and the conversion period itself, but it must be acknowledged that they were historically driven in almost every aspect and that all of the archaeological material is interpreted within a framework that has been profoundly influenced by Bede's text.

As interest in the archaeology of the early church structures increased, so too did interest in establishing material evidence of pagan temple structures where previous generations had been content to assume that pagans worshiped outside in woods and groves (Semple 2007: 365). This has not been a simple task, in part because it is not a firmly established fact that the pagan population of England ever built temples. The paucity of archaeological evidence has led to a body of research which uses place-names to argue that a series of specific places would have been the focus of pagan worship (J. Blair 1995; Gelling 1961: 8-10; Meaney 1995; D. M. Wilson 1985). The assertion that the pagan population had built temples, originally found in Bede and passed down through generations of scholarship, as well as the newly available Scandinavian material, formed the basis for interpreting a series of structures, excavated during this period, as temples. Most importantly, structure D2 at Yeavering (Hope-Taylor 1977: 277-8), described

below, but also Building C at the site of Thirlings in Northumberland (O'Brien 2000). The work done on these sites shows a specifically twentieth century impulse toward materializing our notions of pagan worship; it has become more important to make tangible what we think we know from our studies of the texts.

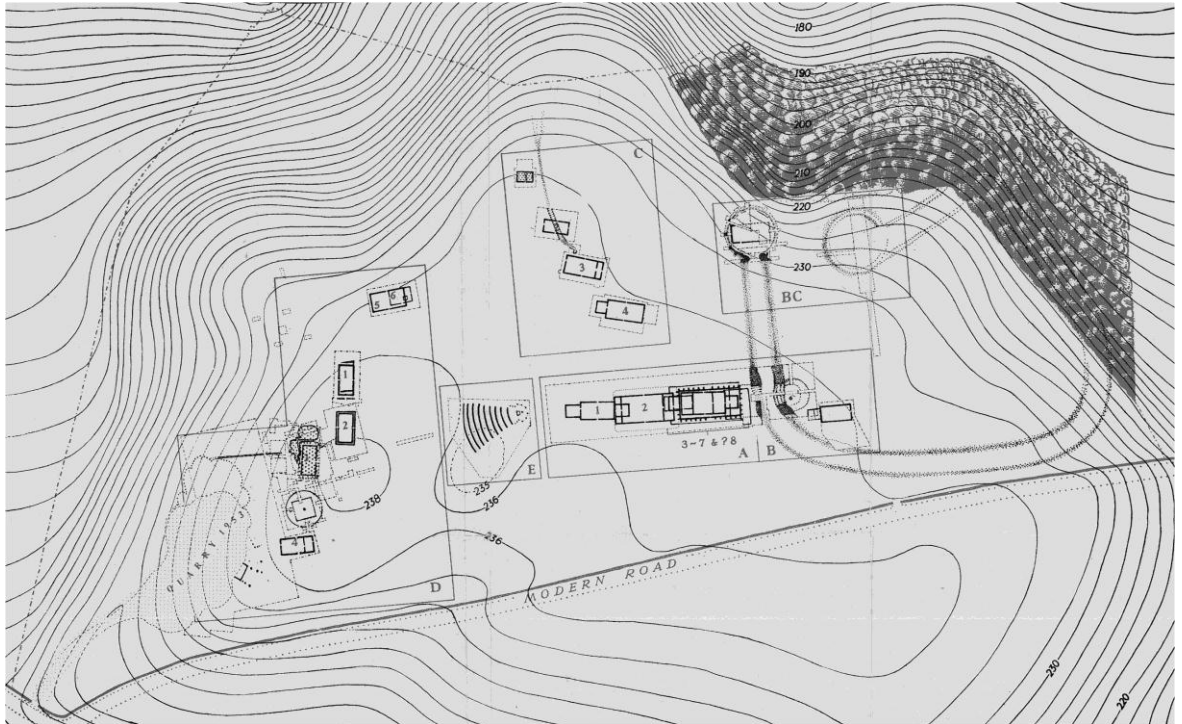


Figure 25: Plan of excavated structures at Yeavinger with the temple complex to the far left (Hope-Taylor 1977: unpaginated)

As well as making use of the Scandinavian and Continental material, the archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon period in the years after 1950 has also drawn heavily from Scottish, Welsh and Irish scholarship. Barbara Yorke has shown that the study of the conversion in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England has, in the face of the increased political devolution of the early twenty-first century, begun to be studied as one subject in recent years (Yorke 2006: 5). She notes that this should have the effect of allowing “contrasts and comparisons to emerge more clearly” (Yorke 2006: 5), but provides no explanation for this unexpected shift in focus. At the same time, archaeological scholars of the period have rejected the idea of “blanket similarity” between the early medieval churches of Ireland, Scotland and Wales (Edwards 2009). There are a variety of approaches to the subject, but it should not come as a surprise that approaches to the archaeology of the early medieval religious past should change as a result of political reconfiguration within the British Isles. On the contrary, in light of the history discussed in the previous chapters, it is exactly what we would expect to see.

Recent archaeological work on the subject has become increasingly diverse in its methods and research questions. The cognitive approaches of the late twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century have been important in pushing the boundaries of what was considered knowable about religion from this period. Martin Carver has written: “In the last twenty years, early medieval archaeologists have explored religion as politics, religion as process, religion as symbolic language, as the architect of landscape, as multi-vocal and reflexive, and designed the archaeological protocols to go with these new approaches” (Carver 2010: 3). Carver’s work has been especially influential in arguing for a conception of Anglo-Saxon paganism as a fully realized world-view, and one that was equally as intellectually complex and as vibrant as the Christianity that followed it (Carver 1998b: 11-2).

Finally, a further key difference of the archaeology of the post-war period and beyond is the addition of a focus on the role of women as religious practitioners and active participants in the Conversion process. The role of noble or religious women had been long acknowledged and the stories of individuals such as Queen Bertha and St Hild can be found in many narratives, but the role of common, unnamed women began to be explored in the archaeological record in the 1960’s. The work of Audrey Meaney and Tania Dickinson on the idea of ‘cunning women’, female skeletons buried with a variety of amulets and charms – frequently in a bag tied at the waist – who may have acted as healers within their community before, during and after the Conversion (Dickinson 1993; Meaney 1981). This may be the pre-Christian precursor to the small reliquaries buried with Anglo-Saxon women in Christian graves (Hills 2011).

Others have suggested that there may have been a class of female burial controllers, whose influence on the mode of burial would have continued past the Conversion and who may have been responsible for carrying on old ways of burial in the absence of a clear directive from the newly established church or input from the male missionaries of the early Conversion (Geake 2003: 266). In other words, the cunning women identified by Meaney and Dickinson above may have in fact been buried with an unusual selection of grave-goods, not because they were healers or fortune-tellers, but because of their association with the ritual preparation of bodies for burial (Geake 2003: 264). Whether they are viewed as having been active agents in bringing about religious transition (Gräslund 2003: 492), or as expressing resistance to the new religion through their continued use of pagan symbols (Wicker 2003: 535-6), non-elite women from throughout northern Europe were increasingly seen as a crucial part of the story of religious change in their communities (Carver 2003a: 9-10).

The broadening that the field of Anglo-Saxon religious archaeology has undergone in the previous 60 years has added greatly to the base of evidence from which scholars of the period can draw. As the range of available evidence has become more broad, the subject has become more complex and nuanced. Strong conclusions about the nature of the Conversion are less readily made, but at the same time, the complexity of the picture presented by recent studies must more closely approximate the confusing time of change and upheaval of the Conversion.

Art and Sculpture

In tearing apart the strands of antiquarianism to define various separate disciplines, we have dispersed the Anglo-Saxon past into a variety of subject areas that seem far less interconnected than they really are. Historians, art historians, architectural historians, archaeologists, theologians and scholars of English literature all examined the same material from different perspectives, but the subject has not yet fully formed as one integrated whole. Despite sharing so much, these disciplines lacked – and still lack – a common vocabulary. For example, Jane Hawkes has shown that the early Christian sculptural material from both England and Ireland lies at the heart of an ongoing debate between art historians and archaeologists over which discipline can effect the most proper study of the material (J. Hawkes 2009: 397-8). She demonstrated that the development of the study of early medieval sculpture since 1900 has been dominated by stylistic and typological studies which have in turn been criticized by archaeologists as subjective and unscientific (J. Hawkes 2009: 398, 408). This is a part of a larger conflict between art historians and archaeologists over the appropriate study of material culture (Wicker 1999). The end of antiquarianism, and the resultant dispersal of the study of the Conversion into separate disciplinary categories, has thus not had positive results. Where once the Conversion might have been studied in an holistic and inclusive way, it is now studied by individuals who may borrow from other fields, but for the most part concern themselves with only a discrete data set. The current emphasis on interdisciplinarity in academia has not been enough to heal the rifts between disciplines nor to create a shared vocabulary.

Anglo-Saxon sculpture began to be seriously considered as a dataset which could inform discussion of early medieval religion and other aspects of life in the Anglo-Saxon world. Beginning in 1984, the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, based at Durham University, published a series of volumes that contain an exhaustive, descriptive list of

every piece of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, divided by county and commencing with County Durham and Northumberland (Cramp 1984). Since that time, nine further volumes have been produced, covering large swathes of the Anglo-Saxon world. These volumes do not put forth any overarching interpretation of the sculpture of Conversion, and they have been roundly criticized for their reliance on an antiquated notion of style, among other issues (Orton 1999: 220-1). Their use of modern county boundaries and respect for the modern demarcation of the Scottish and Welsh borders may also be questioned. They have, however, been effective in bringing the totality of Anglo-Saxon sculpture into the scholarly arena and the consistent reporting style used across the volumes means that they provide for the possibility of an unprecedented comparative dataset of stone sculpture.

Although much of the scholarship on sculpture addresses either paganism or fully established Christianity, there have been some debates in which stone crosses have been seen as the tools of missionaries who used them as teaching tools to enlighten the illiterate population. William Stevens wrote that monumental crosses were originally used as “a standard of the faith, and a centre for preaching the gospel” (Stevens 1904: 62-3). He theorized that the original crosses were intended as temporary instillations and that, especially in those cases where churches were not built immediately, they would have been replaced by permanent and highly decorated stone crosses that served as a focus for worship (Stevens 1904: 63). Although this notion was dismissed by Collingwood, who asserted that the missionaries would not have required a purpose built cross in order to spread their message (W. G. Collingwood 1927: 4-5), it was taken up again in the 1960’s by George Addleshaw (Addleshaw 1963: 10-11) and later by Gerald Bonner (Bonner 1999: 366). On the other hand, Jane Hawkes rejected this notion of “teaching crosses” in relation to the figurative representations found on some pieces of Anglo-Saxon sculpture (J. Hawkes 2003: 365). She argued that, instead of tools of conversion, these crosses told a more nuanced story to an already Christianized population and celebrated the “means by which each believer was able to participate in the mysteries of Christ” (J. Hawkes 2003: 365). At the same time, Hawkes also argued that ecclesiastical stone sculpture was not merely an expression of faith, but also a way of expressing the wealth and power of the churches that they adorned and also that they served a commemorative purpose for the dead of the local community (J. Hawkes 1999: 410, 17).

The crosses at Ruthwell and Bewcastle have been known since the nineteenth century, and we have seen how Kemble’s identification of the runic inscription on the Ruthwell

cross in 1840 added greatly to the earlier discussion of this monument (see Chapter Five). In the past 60 years, several studies have expanded our understanding of these two sculptures. Most crucially for this study, the large literature surrounding the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses has brought together ideas about the religious expression present in these pieces and the processes of Conversion in the north of Anglo-Saxon England (Farrell 1986; McEntire 1986; Ó Carragáin 1986, 1999, 2005; Orton 1999; Orton et al. 2007).

Archaeology and Text

Although there was a seismic shift in the way that authorship and the creation of (Meaney 1995) texts was conceptualized during the latter half of the twentieth century, it has not had much of an effect on the use of written sources in the field of early medieval archaeology. Lip service has often been paid to the notion that Bede and his contemporaries were far from unbiased (see Chapter Two), but this has not substantially altered the ways in which their texts have been used. When, for example, Brian Hope-Taylor excavated the important site of Yeavering in Northumbria between 1953 and 1962 (Hope-Taylor 1977: 28), although his methods differed greatly from past excavation techniques, his research questions and his interpretations would not have seemed foreign to an antiquarian of the nineteenth or even eighteenth century. His conclusions were based on the same textual evidence, supported by generations of scholarship and predicated on the veracity and reliability of Bede's narrative. Beyond his identification of the site as the same Ad Gefrin and his assignment of the various structures to the time of King Edwin, Hope-Taylor additionally used Bede's conversion narrative to explain the majority of what was found on the site. For example, when interpreting a structure (Building D2) he asserted that it was a pagan temple, supporting this claim with reference to the texts. Hope-Taylor wrote that it was clear from Pope Gregory's letter to Mellitus that this structure would not have been destroyed but rather converted to use as a Christian place of worship (Hope-Taylor 1977: 278). Hope-Taylor related this to the fact that Paulinus choose Yeavering as the site of his missionary action and, importantly, the location of the group baptism documented at Ad Gefrin in AD 627 (Hope-Taylor 1977: 280). This reveals a continued uncritical use of Bede's text, even in the second half of the twentieth century.

Although scholars have, in recent years, begun to question what the relationship should be between text and archaeology in the study of the Anglo-Saxon past, it must be acknowledged that in many ways they continue to be used in much the same way as we

have seen throughout the previous chapters. Many historians continued to study the Conversion through the textual sources with little or no reference to the archaeological material (see Hunter Blair 1970 for example, reissued in 1990). Others used the archaeological material without reference to unanswered questions that remain within the archaeological community. In 1958, when she gave her inaugural lecture for her election to the Chair of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge, Dorothy Whitelock wrote that the site of Yeavinger should be of as much interest as Sutton Hoo to *Beowulf* scholars, “since it provides the first archaeological evidence of impressive halls in which life could be lived nobly, as in the poem” (Whitelock 1958: 18). Here again we see the influence of the long-standing tradition of interpreting the material evidence by means of the written record and elucidation of the written record by the material evidence in a cyclical pattern. The relationship between *Beowulf* and the archaeological record has been explored in previous chapters, but scholars began to think reflexively about this connection beginning in the late 1950’s and continued into the present day (Cramp 1957; Davidson 1980; Frank 1992; Hills 1996). By 1997, when the historian Richard Fletcher wrote his comprehensive overview of the conversion of Europe, he used a large number of archaeological studies to supplement the textual material (R. Fletcher 1997), suggesting that perhaps historians and archaeologists have, in recent times, been moving closer in their working relationship. It is, however, important to note that the sites he used (limited to Yeavinger and Sutton Hoo in England (R. Fletcher 1997: 124-5)) are those that have been repeatedly explained through the use of the textual sources. One cannot help but discern a circular and self-perpetuating relationship that has endured into the present.

Attempts to understand the archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon past without reference to the textual material have not been well received, and remain few and far between. Chris Arnold’s 1988 *Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* is a key example of an attempt to step outside of the text-based paradigm (reissued as C. J. Arnold 1997). This processual study was greeted by a chorus of negative reviews (see Harke 1989; Richards 1989 for example). Others have attempted to think critically about the relationship between archaeology and text without discarding one or the other, most notably John Moreland (Moreland 2001), discussed above in Chapter One of this thesis. There have been changes to the context within which this work is being carried out, but mainstream archaeological investigations of the Conversion are still being conducted today using an essentially unchanged methodology to that of their late Victorian predecessors. In his 2010 book, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, Richard Hoggett shows that this reliance on text and textual explanation continues to this day. His historical framework is

primarily based on Bede, despite the relatively small amount of information in the *Ecclesiastical History* which pertains to East Anglia (Hoggett 2010: 22). Although Hoggett's study ties together the textual narrative with the reuse of Roman structures by Christian missionaries, the landscape changes that resulted from the Conversion and the evidence for both inhumation and cremation, the emphasis essentially remains on the burial evidence. Beyond the larger historical framework, Hoggett also used text to explore specific burial practices. Like scholars since the early nineteenth century, Hoggett explained pagan cremation through the text of *Beowulf* (Hoggett 2010: 88-9). Even at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, text and material culture remain locked in the same relationship that they have always had, and even the newest studies of the Conversion remain unable to see beyond the boundaries established by the textual sources.

Case Study 1: The 'Final Phase'

The first case study explores the late twentieth-century debate surrounding the nature of the changing burial practices present in the seventh century. The history of the 'Final Phase' model of pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries was explored previously by Andy Boddington in a chapter entitled *Models of Burial, Settlement and Worship: The Final Phase Reviewed*, in which he laid out the early origins beginning with T.C. Lethbridge and E.T. Leeds in the 1930's (Boddington 1990: 179-80). This model presupposes a period after the Conversion began in which there were two disparate patterns of burial practice being undertaken simultaneously: unfurnished churchyard burials, and 'Final Phase' cemeteries, which betrayed a syncretic response to the shifting religious climate of the seventh century. Boddington summarized the model in eight points:

1. A new set of cemeteries are established under Christian influence.
2. These are close to the settlement, whereas their pagan predecessors tended to be further afield, often at boundaries.
3. The burials are entirely inhumation.
4. Orientation is consistent and west-east.
5. Some graves are in, or under, barrows.
6. The proportion of graves without artefacts, or only with a knife, is high.
7. Artefacts relate predominately to utilitarian clothing or are small personal tokens. Weapons are rare.
8. Some objects, notably cross forms, have Christian significance (Boddington 1990: 181).

One of the best-known examples of a final phase cemetery is the site of Winnall II, excavated by Audrey Meaney and published by Sonia Chadwick Hawkes (Meaney and Hawkes 1970). This burial ground contained no obvious signs of Christian religious expression, nor any Christian objects and the seemingly careless way that the bodies were deposited seemed to Meaney and Hawkes to run counter to their expectations of Christian burial (Meaney and Hawkes 1970: 52). Hawkes explains this as “a picture of a newly converted people, still superstitious and uneasy in their religion, secretly carrying out heathen rites of propitiation” (Meaney and Hawkes 1970: 52). It was the very near proximity of earlier cemetery Winnall I, which is located only 370 yards away, that convinced the authors that this must have been a final phase site; they write that “At this period it mean only one thing: that it was the Church that was responsible for the transference of burial away from the burial grounds of the heathen fathers and forefathers” (Meaney and Hawkes 1970: 54).

By 1983, Morris was able to identify 35 cemeteries which fell under this definition (R. Morris 1983: 55-6), but in his analysis, the ‘final phase’ cemetery, as it had been defined up unto that point was merely one of several possible patterns of development (R. Morris 1983: 62). On the contrary, Boddington later argued that these cemeteries did not represent a separate phase at all, but rather form a part of the “constant addition and abandonment of cemeteries as the Anglo-Saxon landscape evolved” (Boddington 1990: 196).

The work of Helen Geake in the 1990’s and 2000’s further complicated the notion of the Final Phase by proposing that there were in fact three types of Conversion Period cemeteries dating to the seventh century, rather than the accepted dichotomy between final phase and churchyard burials (Geake 2002: 149-50). Having previously produced a gazetteer of all of the Conversion period cemeteries that contained grave goods (Geake 1997), Geake suggested a third category of cemeteries, which occupies the intermediary position between the two: these are cemeteries that mostly follow the pattern of a churchyard burial but which contain a few well-furnished graves (Geake 2002: 150). As examples, she cites Taplow, St Paul-in-the-Bail in Lincolnshire, St Cuthbert’s grave in the Durham Cathedral and Eccles in Kent (Geake 2002: 150-1).

In response to Helen Geake’s 1997 book, John Hines wrote a review in the journal *Medieval Archaeology*, strongly criticizing the attempt that she made to redefine the period. Not only did he prefer what he called the “familiar Final Phase” to the new term,

but he also called into question the dating of the period that she used, querying the use of AD 850 the end of the period (Hines 1999: 309). The Conversion Period, as Geake defined it, uses the historically attested date for the beginning of the period, but stretches to the arrival of the Vikings without any justification for choosing that date.

More recently, there has been increasing critique of the notion of Final Phase cemeteries, and the idea that a monocausal explanation is possible for the varied burial practices of the seventh century has also been called into question (Hadley 2000: 159). The idea of a syncretic expression of religious belief has been shown to be vastly more complicated than had been previously understood by Pluskowski and Patrick, whose work recognized the “dynamic fluidity in both Christian and pagan paradigms” (Pluskowski and Patrick 2003: 31). The idea of a discrete ‘Final Phase’, predicated on both the notion of a universal response to emerging Christianity amongst diverse pagan groups, and a clearly binary understanding of the religions that flanked it, is difficult to sustain once the complexity of the period – not to mention the complexity of syncretism – has been fully acknowledged.

The debate surrounding Final Phase cemeteries is the twentieth-century incarnation of some of the concerns that have occupied antiquarians and archaeologists of the period since the very earliest studies. Scholars have been concerned with the effect of conversion on burial – often to the exclusion of its effect on any other indicator – arguably since the work of Sir Thomas Browne in the seventeenth century. In many ways, the debate over the funerary practices of this period is merely an extension of the concerns of previous generations of scholars. On the other hand, new data and better dating have led to a more ambiguous suite of evidence which has in turn led to increasingly complicated explanations. Crucially for this study, the discussion of the concept of a ‘Final Phase’ in Anglo-Saxon England has been constructed as a fully archaeological debate in the way that no other scholarly debate in this subject area has been structured. The evidence drawn on by exponents of both sides of this question is outside of the purview of the textual sources for this period – we cannot look to the written record to either confirm or deny the existence of final phase cemeteries. It is this material culture-focused epistemology that marks out this debate as something new and different in the field of Conversion studies.

Case Study 2: Sutton Hoo

The second case study addresses the other extreme of Conversion Period burial: the person buried in Mound 1 of Sutton Hoo was clearly of high status and the grave is unique in its array of high-value, beautiful items. The question of who was buried in the elaborate grave at Sutton Hoo, as we have seen in the previous chapter, occupied the attention of scholars and the general public beginning in the late 1930's. In the latter half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, however, this interest has not abated. The site of Sutton Hoo was reexcavated twice during this period and the objects reanalysed many times, and many explanations were put forth to explain its form and function. Its inclusion into the national curriculum has greatly increased public curiosity and the many scholarly reanalyses of the material from this site has only increased the degree of interest in identifying the historical figure buried within it and understanding the meaning of the elaborate grave.

Sutton Hoo was crucially important in developing our understandings of the Anglo-Saxon period in the twentieth century, not only within archaeology, but also in the wider field of early medieval history. As Rosemary Cramp pointed out in 1957, it was Sutton Hoo that changed perceptions of the descriptions found within *Beowulf* of the lavish grave goods and luxurious imported items described in the funeral scene (Cramp 1957: 57). The archaeology of the mid-twentieth century saw it as valuable to be able to draw a one-to-one equivalency between the recently discovered material remains and the words of the ancient poem. Some even went so far as to claim that *Beowulf* had been written in East Anglia in order to make the analogy a closer fit (O'Loughlin 1964: 11-2). Comparing the descriptions found within the poem to the newly excavated helmets, swords and halls provided both archaeologists and scholars of the text itself with a firmer epistemological footing than had ever previously been possible.

It is important to note that the religious aspects of the burial at Sutton Hoo are only one aspect amongst many that made it so crucial to the study of the Anglo-Saxon past. In his 1992 retrospective of the impact of the Sutton Hoo excavations on the study of the Anglo-Saxon past, James Campbell neglected to mention any questions of religious expression (Campbell 1992). Campbell focused on the dating of the site and the identification of the individual buried in the grave, but was most concerned with the monetary value of the items contained in the graves and what they would have meant economically to the community that deposited them (Campbell 1992: 88). Others have explored the implications for early medieval kingship (Keynes 1992) or the art of the period (Bailey 1992). It has even been analysed by prehistoric archaeologists, using a specifically prehistoric perspective to explore the material (Parker-Pearson et al. 1993).

This thesis focuses on the religious aspects of the burial, but it must be acknowledged that this is only one reason amongst many that this site occupied – and continues to occupy – a preeminent place in our understanding of the Anglo-Saxon period.

As discussed above, Scandinavian scholars and material were key to expanding the twentieth century understanding of the Anglo-Saxon religious past, and Sutton Hoo is a clear example of this influence. Sune Lundqvist challenged the notion that the burial at Sutton Hoo was inherently pagan – based largely on the fact that it contained grave-goods – in an article published in 1948 in which he argued that it was in fact an expression of an orthodox Christian worldview (Lundqvist 1948: 133). He based this conclusion in large part on the presence of the spoons and the silver bowls with cross-shaped decorations on them (Lundqvist 1948: 134). This view was contradicted by Charles Green, who saw the burial as fully pagan, and therefore likely to belong to Aethelhere, “the last pagan leader of strength who maintained pagan practice in East Anglia” (Green 1963: 98).

Bruce-Mitford also took up Lundqvist’s challenge and argued that, on the contrary, it was not possible that a Christian king could be buried in a pagan burial ground, although he did allow that it could have been a cenotaph if the body had been buried in a Christian rite elsewhere (Bruce-Mitford 1974: 33). By the 1970’s, however, the results of reexcavation had suggested, although not proved conclusively, that there had in fact been a body in the space provided (Bruce-Mitford 1974: 34). He concluded therefore that the burial could have been either Christian or pagan, but that it could not be seen as orthodox Christian as Lundqvist had suggested (Bruce-Mitford 1974: 35). To Bruce-Mitford’s mind, this interpretation only served to increase the likelihood that the individual buried in the boat was Raedwald, whose tale of religious indecision, as found in Bede, made him an ideal candidate for such a mixed bag of religious expression (Bruce-Mitford 1974: 33).

Mound 1 was re-excavated between 1965 and 1970, at which point an impression of the boat was taken in plaster and each individual rivet was removed (A. C. Evans 1986: 101). Further investigation was done by Martin Carver and his team between 1983 and 1992 (Carver 1998a: 62). Throughout each new analysis of the site and its contents, the identity of the individual buried with so much effort and expense in Mound 1 has remained a key question, and one for which the religious artefacts have been drafted into service to answer. As in the previous generation, archaeologists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have leaned – although perhaps less confidently – toward

identifying him as Raedwald. Without a doubt, the most complicated set of evidence that the contents of Mound 1 has presented to archaeologists is that which speaks to the religious expression of the individual buried within it: the objects appeared to some to contradict the pagan nature of the burial itself. Identifying the person as a Christian convert, on the basis of the synergistic mixture of items included in the grave, limited both the possibility of identifying the grave with an historically attested individual and the period to which this burial could be dated. Raedwald's complex relationship to Christianity in Bede's narrative suited the seemingly contradictory nature of the physical evidence, or as Simon Keynes put it, "the presence of objects with a 'Christian' complexion in a burial spectacularly 'heathen' in its conception seems appropriate for one who is known to have been broad-minded in his religious beliefs" (Keynes 1992: 103).

The report for the 1939 excavations was published in three large volumes by Rupert Bruce-Mitford between 1975 and 1983 (Bruce-Mitford 1975, 1978, 1983). The final volume of this detailed report contains a section on the silver bowls and the "Saulos and Paulos" spoons, in which much is made of their Christian imagery and inscriptions. The identity of the individual buried in Mound 1 was named here as Raedwald, based on the evidence from Bede of his conversion and subsequent relapse into paganism, and the spoons in particular are suggested to have been "a pair presented to him in Kent at the time of his conversion alluding to the analogous change in the life of St Paul" (Bruce-Mitford 1983: 136). The idea of these spoons as a baptismal gift, and Bruce-Mitford's view of the silver bowls as having an "intrinsic Christian aspect" (Bruce-Mitford 1983: 125), strengthened his confidence in the identification of the individual as Raedwald.

Angela Care Evans wrote that it was difficult to imagine that the king of a Christianized East Anglia would have been buried in what she termed such an "arrogantly pagan" style (A. C. Evans 1986: 109). She argued that it was possible only to suggest that the burial might belong to Raedwald, but that it might also have been Sigebert, Ecric or Eorpwald, all also rulers of East Anglia from a similar period (A. C. Evans 1986: 110). Care Evans, however, was less interested in the meaning of the religious items in the mound than the archaeologists both before and after her. On the whole, however, the scholarship of the 1960's and 1970's showed less preoccupation with the religious questions surrounding the site than can be seen in the decades that followed. This can perhaps be seen as a result of the dominant theoretical paradigm of the period, processualism, which saw the role of archaeology as one of exploring questions of technology and subsistence, and not ideology or religion. In one of the key papers from this generation of archaeologists, Christopher Hawkes wrote that, at least in the case of prehistoric archaeology, "unaided

inference from material remains to spiritual life is the hardest inference of all” (C. F. Hawkes 1954: 162). Even though the study of Sutton Hoo is what Hawkes would have called “text-aided” (C. F. Hawkes 1954: 156), it seems probable that the general lack of archaeological focus on religion may have bled over into Evan’s analysis of the remains which gave comparatively little space to the question of whether the person buried here was a pagan or a Christian.

It was the transition away from processual archaeology in the 1990’s that reintroduced the question of the religious affiliation of Sutton Hoo as the primary research question surrounding the burial in Mound 1. Martin Carver’s reexcavation and reanalysis of the remains – which began in the early 1980’s – has added dimension to the discussion of the grave-goods. For the first part of his work on the site, the medieval archaeological establishment remained in the processual mindset and focused almost exclusively on what the site could tell us about the formation of early kingdoms in the Anglo-Saxon world (Carver 2011: 36). However, as important large-scale shifts occurred in the archaeological zeitgeist in the 1990’s, medieval archaeology became interested once again in questions of religion and Carver’s own analysis of the site has become much more focused on the social aspects of the burials and what they meant. He has argued that graves are poems (Carver 2000), constructed as a “palimpsest of allusions, in which private hopes and fears are interwoven with the current anxieties of the international situation” (Carver 1998b: 19). By 1998, his view of Sutton Hoo was that it was “an experiment in pagan kingship, undertaken in emulation of the kingship being provoked by Christianity, but at the same time rejecting Christianity’s pan-European imperial program” (Carver 1998b: 20). In Carver’s view, the pagan character of the burial can be attributed in part to the pressures of the international political situation, as a display marking the alignment of the princes of Sutton Hoo with the pagan Scandinavians against the Christian Franks (Carver 2005: 313).

Although Carver is certainly the most prolific of those interested in Sutton Hoo in recent years, his is by no means the only interpretation. Others have quarreled with his interpretation of it as a pagan grave. Carver’s paradigm was written as a direct counterargument to Fletcher’s assertion of the previous year, in which he stated that Sutton Hoo was a Christian interpretation of a preexisting traditional practice (R. Fletcher 1997: 125). On the contrary, John Blair has written that Sutton Hoo must be seen as an expression a new cultural phenomenon, and therefore as the grave of, if not an fully Christianized person, at least not a pagan one (J. Blair 2005: 53). For Blair, the key aspect of the burial in Mound 1 was its expression of power, status and what he terms

“conspicuous commemoration”, but he emphasized the newness of the ritual, and its disconnection from the traditional pagan form of burial (J. Blair 2005: 53, footnote 167).

Recent years have provided an expanded number of sites that have been compared to Sutton Hoo. These included the reanalysis of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery and boat-burial at Snape in Suffolk by William Filmer-Sankey in 2001, a nearby site which shared some similarities of form with Sutton Hoo (Filmer-Sankey 2001: 264-66). New discoveries of similar high-status graves with artefacts that make their religious affiliation difficult to discern, such as that of the Prittlewell Prince in 2003 near Southend-on-Sea in Essex, whilst providing us with an increased data set, have led to more questions than answers. The large number of grave-goods present in this burial, and the explicitly Christian nature of some of the objects, as well as the tantalizing possibility of linking the grave to an historically attested individual (I. Blair 2007: 108) have led to many of the same questions that have been asked about the remains at Sutton Hoo. Key to the interest in this grave by scholars of the Conversion was the discovery of several gold foil crosses, which the excavators suggest may have been attached to clothing or to a veil laid over the face of the deceased (MoLAS 2004: 28).



Figure 26: Gold foil crosses from Prittlewell (MoLAS 2004: 28)

In a pamphlet released by the Museum of London Archaeology Service, who excavated the site, the age-old question of syncretic burial is revived thus: “Although the manner of the burial – a chamber grave beneath a barrow mound with grave goods – is that of a very high status pagan, some of the grave-goods suggest contact with Christianity” (MoLAS 2004: 40). Using the textual evidence, the excavators have suggested that a

likely possibility for the individual whose body lay in this grave is King Sabert, nephew of Ethelbert, a king of Kent who died in AD 616 (I. Blair 2007: 108). Similar questions have been raised about the high-status bed burial and Anglo-Saxon cemetery found at the site of Street House near Whitby, where the orientation of the graves from East to West and the presence of some knives and whetstones deposited in a cross pattern has led to some discussion of the religious meaning behind this elite cemetery (Sherlock 2011: 13, 32). Both Prittlewell and Street House await full publication and further analysis of the finds.

The long-running debate over who was buried in Sutton Hoo, and what his religious beliefs were, has been key to the ongoing development of our understanding of this crucial and well-known site. This debate continues to this day and seems likely to occupy the minds of archaeologists for many years to come. Religion and text have been inextricably linked in discussions of the subject: the degree to which the individual buried there can be seen to have believed in the meaning behind the religious symbols he was buried with has, for many, determined which character in Bede's text with which he can be identified. Even those for whom a direct, historically attested identification is not seen as feasible, the religious artefacts buried in the grave at Mound 1 are key to understanding the dating and the meaning of this memorial.

Neopagan Archaeology of the Conversion

A key development of recent years has been the study of the Conversion from a neopagan perspective. Marion Bowman has studied the use of Glastonbury by pilgrims of many denominations (Bowman 2004, 2007, 2008) and identified the site as one of "serial centrality", beginning as an important Christian landmark and widening over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to include many other worldviews (Bowman 2007: 291). In her interviews of the people who flock to Glastonbury every year, Bowman found that "...the varied statements made about Glastonbury's past and present, its connections with a variety of myths, and its local and global significance tend to be presented as unassailable or self-evident fact, for which more conventionally recognized proof is not necessary" (Bowman 2007: 292). Its position, therefore, as the site of a Druidical university where Jesus came to be educated, for example, or as the centre of a series of leylines, can only be supported by archaeological evidence; any evidence which contradicts these pre-determined conclusions is discarded.

Pagan groups are often seen as too far outside of the mainstream to be anything other than a matter of concern for the various heritage bodies and site managers, for whom

these groups are a logistical and conservation problem (see Gingell 1996: 510). At the fringes of archaeology, however, there are some individual archaeologists who explicitly engage with the contemporary or neo-pagan perspectives on these sites. The work of Robert Wallis has been notable. He studied Avebury and other British pagan sites from the perspective of a pagan and a participant in the neo-shamanic rituals, using a queer theoretical background and advocating for the inclusion of the neo-shamanic viewpoint in to archaeological discourse (Wallis 2000: 260; 2003). There are also individual pagan practitioners who, while not themselves archaeologists, have taken an interest in archaeological and conservation questions because they impinge on places of worship, or because they are proponents of the nascent repatriation movement in the UK (see Sebastian 2001). Pagan groups and individuals have been consulted in the process of designing a new heritage management plan for Stonehenge, for instance (Wallis and Blain 2009: 594), demonstrating that, as religious stakeholders, their needs are being considered as part of the process of archaeology and heritage management.

The expanded number of stakeholders adds a further dimension of religious investment in the archaeological creation of knowledge about early medieval religion. Pagan interest is different from the types of Christian involvements that we have seen throughout this thesis in two key ways; firstly, paganism is a multi-vocal, loosely affiliated identity and secondly, British contemporary paganism is a combination of the very old with the very new (Blain and Wallis 2007: 7), lacking the claim to continuity that Christians have used to justify their interest in the early medieval past. It is important to note, however, that the process of appropriating archaeological and historical material for religious means is not different in a pagan context than it is for any other group. In their 2007 book, Blain and Wallis state that “Pagans associate themselves with particular times or cultures and with historic landscapes, constructing spiritual identity by recovering and reclaiming ideas, stories and artefacts” (Blain and Wallis 2007: xiv). This holds true, however, if one replaces the first word in this sentence with the name of any other world religion, and certainly with any of the groups examined in this thesis. The addition of pagan stakeholders has widened the field and given it more dimension, but it has not substantially altered it.

Modern British Christians also continue to imbue early sites with religious or “spiritual” importance; sites such as Glastonbury hold importance both for many different pagan groups and for Christians (Bowman 2004: 274-7). Glastonbury has not only a modern tradition of pagan pilgrimage and procession in honour of the goddess, but also both an Anglican and a Catholic version, carried out each year (Bowman 2004: 279-80; Ivakhiv

2001: 100-1). This is due in part to the continuing belief on the part of Christian pilgrims that Glastonbury is the “earliest site of Christianity in England, allegedly visited by Joseph of Arimathea and perhaps even Jesus himself, and [...] the possible repository of the Grail” (Bowman 2008: 241). It is clear from these examples that there is a continued investment in archaeological sites as religiously important places by individuals and groups that subscribe to a variety of religious and spiritual paths. Whilst this is in some ways a departure from previous generations, in the sense that there is a much greater diversity of stakeholders and interests to be negotiated, in many ways this is a continuity of practice.

Looking Forward

The first decade of the twenty-first century has seen a number of large-scale projects on the subject of Anglo-Saxon religion. These have resulted in several monographs and edited volumes that attempt to elucidate the nature of both pagan and Christian religious expression through the material record. We are perhaps too close to these studies to fully understand the impact of the cultural and religious background in which they have been formed, but it is nonetheless possible to see some general trends in the last few years of scholarship. A selection of these contemporary studies is explored below in order to provide a window into the recent and ongoing trends in studies of the Conversion. This is by no means intended to be exhaustive, but is included here merely to show that the process of creating culturally formed ideas about early medieval religion continues to this day.

Amongst the key publications of the last decade, *The Cross Goes North*, a 2003 volume edited by Martin Carver, has had a big impact on the study of the conversion of Northern Europe (Carver 2003b). This large volume took a uniquely large geographical view of the progress of Christianity as it moved northwards out of Rome in the early medieval period. The papers that make up this volume represent a wide range of subject matter, as well as geographical area and types of evidence used – many papers continued the long tradition of dealing exclusively with burial evidence whilst others explored the landscape, sculptural, textual and other evidence to produce a much more complete picture of the conversion of Northern Europe than had ever before been produced. In Carver’s preface to the volume, he made it clear he viewed the contemporary debates about a unified European community as echoes of the early medieval situation, writing “Central to this debate, then as now, was the question of whether Europe itself was to have the principal identity and authority, or whether each of the new kingdoms should be left to follow its

own path” (Carver 2003a: 12). This new view, which centered on neither a straightforwardly religious, nor a rigidly Marxist interpretation, nonetheless was explicitly seen through the lens of a modern political dualism.

Large-scale edited volumes on the archaeology of paganism in Northern Europe have also been crucial to the recent development of ideas about early medieval religious archaeology. Key amongst these are the volume edited by Andrén et al. entitled *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives* (Anders Andrén et al. 2006) and *Signals of Belief in Early England*, edited by Martin Carver, Sarah Semple and Alex Sanmark (Carver et al. 2010). These volumes demonstrate a renaissance of interest in the pagan early medieval past that includes many scholars working from a variety of different sets of evidence towards the common goal of understanding what came before Christianity. This new generation of scholarship that is shaping current debate has brought forth key ideas about the reanalysis of material culture in light of religion and increasingly advocate for a paradigm that sees objects as a material expression of the prevailing worldview.

Additionally all of the above volumes demonstrate a particularly twenty-first century notion of Northern Europe as a cohesive unit of study. This expanded perspective that saw the Anglo-Saxon Conversion as a part of a larger whole began at the end of the twentieth century with edited volumes such as Barbara Crawford’s *Conversion and Christianity in the North Sea World* (B. Crawford 1998), a selection of chapters that ranged geographically from Kent to Norway, and included many sites in between. Previous studies had included the comparison of Anglo-Saxon objects to those found on the Continent, but the idea that it was possible to think about Christianization – and many other aspects of early medieval archaeology – using a perspective that included wide swathes of modern Europe.

Carver has also shown that even twenty-first century approaches are not immune to historical forces. He writes of the “modern pagans, hedonists and Christian historians”, whose influence on the discourse is problematic (Carver 2010: 3). There is now a wider range of religious practitioners and believers who see themselves as stakeholders in the production of knowledge about early medieval religion, as discussed above. Sites such as Stonehenge, Avebury and Glastonbury have become the location not only of Christian religious pilgrimage, but also pilgrimage by a variety of New Age and neo-pagan sects. Going forward, the archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon conversion appears poised to be more diverse, more broad in its remit and more concerned with the role of Anglo-Saxon England within the wider European context.

Conclusion

As the UK has become measurably less religious and the cultural emphasis has shifted toward multiculturalism as opposed to nationalism, the relative importance of the Christian and pagan remains from the early medieval period have equalized. It is no longer considered necessary, as it was in the past, to valorize the Christian past. This has opened the debate to a much greater diversity of interpretation regarding the motivations of those who converted and how the new Christians expressed their faith through the material world. We have seen above that this shifted the debate towards economics and politics as motivating factors, rather than simple religious faith. Implicit or explicit judgment of the Conversion as a good or correct response to the missionary incursions from Rome have become less acceptable and the rhetoric surrounding the Conversion has become much more value-neutral. As the strictly Marxist interpretations of the late twentieth century have faded away, new ways of rendering the Conversion comprehensible have arisen, often likening it to other large-scale political changes and imbuing it with all of the complexity of our own political and religious debates.

Since the 1980's, as we saw in Chapter One, scholars of the period have begun to think about the past of their discipline and to think reflexively about the nature of their work. This must be seen as a key, although perhaps underappreciated, factor in the changes that have occurred in the study of the Conversion in the last 30 years. By acknowledging the historically dependent nature of their inherited ideas, the scholars of the last three decades have come to challenge the prevalent narrative.

Sue Content and Howard Williams ended their recent study of the development of archeological conceptions of Anglo-Saxon paganism with the statement that it remains to be seen “whether the resurgent interest in the pagan English by archaeologists and cognate disciplines reflects the development of more sophisticated theories and methods of enquiry, free from the shackles of outmoded dogma, or simply yet another phase in the socio-politics of English identity” (Content and Williams 2010: 196). It is clear from the examples explored above that the latter is indeed the case. The social, religious and political picture may look different at the beginning of the twenty-first century than it did in previous ones, but that does not mean that it has any less influence over the ways in which the past is conceptualized.

It is, perhaps, too early to understand what the archaeology of the Conversion in the early twenty first century means about its social context and how our own ideas are being formed and informed by our environment, but we can be sure that this dialogue between scholarship and environment is taking place. It seems likely that we will only come to fully understand our own contemporary paradigm in retrospect, but that should not stop us from attempting to understand our biases and epistemological background.

For of course every story of conversion is the story of a blessed defeat (C.S. Lewis 1955: 7).

Conclusion

To paraphrase Jacquetta Hawkes (who was writing about Stonehenge), every age has the Conversion it deserves – or desires (J. J. H. Hawkes 1967: 174). The Conversion has been repeatedly overwritten with the interests, concerns and anxieties of generations of scholars. Throughout the centuries since the Conversion, studies of this formative religious transition have been almost entirely historically driven. This thesis has shown that the cultural, religious and political contexts in which these studies have been conducted were extremely influential to how and why they were carried out. Study of the Conversion has been heavily influenced, as can be clearly seen in the previous chapters, by fluctuating tides of Protestant fervor, Catholic backlash, English nationalism, Teutonism and ideas about the origin of democracy.

It is indicative of the religious backgrounds of the scholars of this subject that the focus has been, almost without exception, on the mechanics of conversion rather than the reasons for it. In other words, the fact that the Conversion was (at least prior to 1950) almost exclusively studied by people from Christian backgrounds or cultural contexts led to a general lack of interest in why the Conversion took place. Both Catholic and Protestant scholars instead saw the question as reversed and focused on why the Conversion was such a slow process and what could keep people from converting. I argue that as individuals who were convinced, to a greater or lesser degree, of the literal truth of the Bible, the reasons why to convert were obvious to them. They shared a set of revealed truths with their subjects, and as a consequence, these scholars were deaf to the most important and revealing questions that could be asked of the material.

The study of Anglo-Saxonism, which has been a part of scholarly dialogue since the early 1980s, engaged with many aspects of the disciplinary past and how it fits within its cultural context. The studies explored in Chapter One of this thesis demonstrated how scholars have interrogated the ways in which the Anglo-Saxon past has influenced and been influenced by ideas about race, nationalism, colonialism and politics. The relationship between the contemporary religious climate and the study of the Anglo-Saxon religious past has, however, up until this point, been largely ignored. I have argued

that this is a crucial aspect of Anglo-Saxonism that must be included in future studies of the topic.

The influence of cultural context is not unique to the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon religious material, but relevant to all archaeology and arguably all research. The influences that have been traced in this project are relatively accessible because the Conversion, as an important foundational event in the origins of Britain has been open to more overt manipulation. In other words, the ways in which historical factors have influenced the study of the Anglo-Saxon past have not been hidden nor have they been subconscious. As Hutton has recently argued, the spirit of scholarly reflexivity of the study of Anglo-Saxon religion must carry through, not only to our own studies of the period, but must also inform our historiographical studies of the subject (Hutton 2010: 202). It is not enough to contextualize our past: we must also contextualize and situate ourselves in relation to that past.

Suggestions for Future Study

Historiographical studies of archaeology are becoming increasingly popular in the field of archaeology generally, but there remain several areas, especially in early medieval archaeology, where there is room for further investigation. The state of the field was fully explored in Chapter One, and it was made clear that there was a need for increased focus within historiographical scholarship on the subject of Anglo-Saxon archaeology. This is especially true of the study of Anglo-Saxon religion, a subject that has only begun to be explored from a historiographical perspective in the last few years. On the strength of the material collated in this thesis, it is possible to think about suggestions for future research in two ways. Firstly, new studies of the conversion can now be done with a fuller consciousness of the historical background and, secondly, there are a range of potential studies that could further our understanding of the relationship between religion and archaeology, both within Anglo-Saxon archaeology and in the widest scholarly context.

As new Conversion period sites continue to be discovered and attempts are made to explore a synthesized view of the artefacts of conversion, this thesis has provided a backdrop against which new studies can be set, placing them in their historical context and allowing for an interrogation of the assumptions made by past scholars. An archaeological investigation of the Conversion that questions not only the primary textual sources but also the secondary sources of scholarship on the subject is one that

has the potential to become still more complex, multi-vocal and nuanced. Still better would be a study that goes beyond critical analysis of the sources and acknowledges its own place in the larger historical development of the discipline, placing itself in its proper context and grounding itself in the full depth of historical time that has come before it.

This thesis has also laid the intellectual groundwork for future historiographical studies. This thesis has been narrowly defined to fit the confines of space and time, but this research must be seen as a case study of a larger phenomenon. It is not unusual, in the wider field of historical archaeology, for scholars to study religion and religious change. The effect that an alignment (or misalignment) between an archaeologist's personal religious beliefs or religious context, and that of their subjects, can have on their scholarship of past religious practice is an area that is rich in potential in many regions. There is an opportunity for much more research into the effect of religion on the history of historical archaeology, as well as the possibility of comparative studies.

Further research is needed in three key areas; comparative studies of other regions where there is sufficient archaeological study of religious transitions; more intensive biographical research into the lives of some of the lesser known antiquarians mentioned in this text; and the study, across a similar time-scale, of the development of Anglo-Saxon archaeology more broadly. Potential comparative studies using this material could be conducted in the near vicinity, especially in Scandinavia and the rest of the Teutonic world. There are clear connections in terms of similarity of material and processes of conversion, and also a large amount of correspondence exists between scholars in these areas and the records of local and national societies document links to each other. Comparative studies do not need to be limited to Northern Europe, however: the archaeology of conversion in the Americas, Asia and Africa could also be considered. Wherever a transition from one religion to another has taken place, and archaeologists have traced that transition in the material culture, there is the potential for comparison to the study of the Anglo-Saxon religious past. Whether commonalities are ultimately found or not, a comparative analysis between case studies in two or more regions has great potential to contribute to our scholarly understanding of methods, approaches and interpretations.

Throughout this thesis, many biographical studies of individual antiquarians and archaeologists have been consulted and incorporated in the analysis. Many, however, have sadly faded into obscurity and the biographies of these individuals could be researched, through archival, historical and genealogical research, with specific reference

to the political and religious context in which they lived. The constraints of time rendered the story of the personal archives and correspondence of the antiquarians and archaeologists outside of the remit of this thesis, but a study of their backgrounds, particularly with a view to exploring the scholarly networks within which they corresponded and worked could be beneficial.

This project has focused primarily on the Conversion, but a similar long-term study of early medieval religion more broadly also has great potential. Content and Williams' chapter (2010) on the history of the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon paganism and this thesis go some way towards producing an historiography of Anglo-Saxon religion, but an holistic history of the period would be a useful contribution to the field. Similarly, a complete history of the archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon period as a whole has yet to be produced. Some of the studies mentioned in Chapter One, such as Paul Hill's 2006 book on Anglo-Saxon history and Catherine Hills' 2003 *Origins of the English*, although important contributions to the historiography of the period, provide only a partial view of the study of the early medieval period, and the discipline would benefit from an in-depth and large scale historiography of its development.

As archaeology as a discipline searches deeper into its own past and explores its historical origins, we come to better understand our present and future. The areas listed above are several areas where the historiographical study of Anglo-Saxon archaeology could be profitably explored in ways that would benefit both current and future generations of scholars. The existing literature on the subject of Anglo-Saxonism generally (explored in Chapter One) provides an excellent context for studies of the archaeological aspects of the subject, but the unique characteristics of the study of the material culture remains can be subsumed and lost amidst the other disciplines with an interest in this period. There is clear value in teasing out and foregrounding the archaeological strand from amongst the tangle of other types of Anglo-Saxon studies in order to appreciate its place and importance in the wider scholarly context.

Conclusion

The archaeological study of the Conversion taking place today differs in crucial ways from that of the previous centuries, but remains very similar at its core. The excavation and recording techniques have changed, but many of the research questions and interpretations of the finds remain the same. Just as for the Reverend James Douglas, who excavated at the end of the eighteenth century (J. Douglas 1793), the funerary

evidence remains the most important tool for understanding the Conversion. Despite more than two centuries of opening barrows and digging graves, however, we still don't fully understand what they say about the religious affiliation of the people buried within them. In fact, if anything, recent work has only left us *less sure* of what burials and grave goods tell us about the Conversion (Geake 1997: 16-7). It has become increasingly clear that we may never be able to elucidate: how and why the person converted and what it meant to them to be a convert. The other categories of evidence for early medieval religion, such as the art and architecture of early churches, tend to describe not the Conversion itself but its impact. The blank spaces left by the evidence have, however, provided an opportunity for the writing of a compelling narrative that has all too often been aligned with the religious concerns of the contemporary population.

Ultimately we can never escape our own social, political or religious context, nor can we escape our history. This study has not argued that this should be attempted. It is rather suggested here that scholars of the Conversion must be mindful both of the historical context of previous scholarship and the contributing factors that influence their own work. In the same way that we question the motives and biases present in the ancient textual sources, it is necessary to turn a critical eye upon the ideas that we have received from the generations of secondary literature that have been produced on this subject. Understanding the historical drivers and religious motivations of the individuals and groups involved can lead us to reevaluate and reinterpret the ideas they have passed down to us. This has the potential to lead to a more robust and sophisticated interpretation of the Anglo-Saxon religious past.

We will likely never know the motivations that caused the Anglo-Saxon population to convert. If we return to Ronald Hutton's simile of the sealed tin can for which we have no opener (Hutton 2010: 202), it has become increasingly clear over time that we are unlikely to be able to access the interior of the can without significant new archaeological or textual discoveries. We may be slowly approaching a better understanding of when and where the Conversion took place, using the burgeoning amount of material culture that is being discovered, but even the answers to these questions remain imprecise and contested. As Hutton writes, "what is actually happening is that the exterior of the can is being described with more care than before" (Hutton 2010: 202), which is not to say that this is not a worthwhile endeavor. It is of absolute necessity that we continue to try to understand the Conversion. Perhaps it is time to admit that it matters less what the true nature of the Conversion is or was, or whether there is an independent truth *out there* that can be accessed. What is crucial is to understand how these questions have been

answered, and what those answers tell us about both our own history and our current understandings of the subject.

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